

Towards

Marx

SUSOBHAN SARKAR



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Susobhan Sarkar



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*Souls that have toil'd and wrought,
and thought with me—*

Tennyson

Sense that mine will be wrought
and thought with me—

Tennyson

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- 3 'Revision-Reiteration-Expansion', *Parichay* (Bengali), Vol. XXIII, 3, 1963. Translated by the author.
- 4 'The Historical Approach in Marx', Mohit Sen & M B Rao ed., *Das Kapital Centenary Volume*, New Delhi : People's Publishing House (P) Ltd., 1968.
- 5 'Marx on Indian History', P C Joshi ed., *Homage to Karl Marx*, New Delhi : People's Publishing House (P) Ltd., 1969.
- 6 'The Thought of Gramsci', *Mainstream*, 2 November 1968.
- 7 'Military Action in Czechoslovakia : A Socialist Criticism', P K Sundaram ed., *Whither Czechoslovakia*, Dawn Publishers, 1969.
- 8 'Marx and Man', *Mainstream*, 29 March 1969.
- 9 'Historical Writings of Engels', Mohit Sen ed., *Society & Revolution*, New Delhi : People's Publishing House (P) Ltd., 1970.
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1. The first part of the history is the history of the world from the beginning of time to the present day.
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TOWARDS MARX

1871

AN INTRODUCTORY ANALYSIS OF DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

This essay in its scope is a historical study and not an attempt at philosophical criticism. The writer has not the equipment for either expounding the technical character, or examining the validity, of Marx's Philosophy. But nobody will deny to-day that even for a student of history the proper understanding of recent and contemporary events involves some knowledge of the nature of Marxian thought.

Communist writers claim that the essence of Marxism lies in the philosophy of Dialectical Materialism which applied to history becomes Historical Materialism or the Materialist Conception of History.

Marx and Engels started their career as Hegelians. The whole body of Marxist thought bears the impress of the ideas of Hegel. The first point to grasp therefore in a study of Dialectical Materialism is the importance of Hegel in the history of philosophy. The significance of Hegel is supposed to lie in his emphasis on the world being a changing process ; the universe according to him is in constant evolution, its character is dynamic. This is called the dialectical outlook in opposition to the static or 'metaphysical' point of view. The older philosophies were metaphysical in this sense because they neglected change and universal interaction in favour of analysis in a static way or abstract isolated examination. Hegel believed that physical nature, social history and human thought are all characterised by dialectic movement. His new logic, therefore, "in forcing its way beyond the narrow horizon of formal logic" "contains the germs of a more comprehensive view of the world."¹ It is claimed that Hegel's logic bears the same relation to formal logic as higher mathematics to elementary

mathematics. Engels declared that "Nature's process is dialectical and not metaphysical" and explained himself in the following way² :

"This method of investigation" (analysis of nature into its individual parts) "has also left us as a legacy the habit of observing natural objects and natural processes in their isolation, detached from the whole vast interconnection of things ; and therefore, not in their motion, but in their repose ; not as essentially changing but as fixed constants ; not in their life, but in their death.... To the metaphysician, things and their mental images, ideas, are isolated, to be considered one after the other apart from each other, rigid, fixed objects of investigation given once for all.... The metaphysical mode of outlook... sooner or later always reaches a limit beyond which it becomes one-sided, limited, abstract.... Dialectics... grasps things and their images, ideas" (Engels is speaking here of materialist dialectics of course), "essentially in their interconnection, in their sequence, their movement, their birth and death."

Hegel represented the culmination of speculative Idealism. For a period his authority was overwhelming but a reaction came with Feuerbach who is chiefly remembered for his belief that man has created God in his own image. Feuerbach rejected idealism though he fought shy of the word materialism. He has been claimed as a precursor of the humanistic trend in the modern religious world. Through his influence, Marx and Engels broke with philosophical idealism.

Engels complained that Hegel's "mode of thought placed everything on its head and completely reversed the real connections of things in the world."³ Marx thought that Hegel's explanation of the universe was mystical because in his system the Idea was the only reality. They therefore turned towards materialism as more satisfactory. As political radicals they also disagreed with Hegel's glorification of the Prussian State and wanted to develop a revolutionary philosophy.

The materialist tradition was as ancient as the idealistic. Even before Plato, Democritus expounded a materialist philo-

sophy. Materialism assumed its developed form in the 17th and 18th centuries in England and France and was profoundly impressed by the Newtonian sciences. In the early 19th century, this was the mode of thought in philosophy alternative to speculative idealism. In rejecting Hegel, Marx and Engels however did not identify themselves with Anglo-French materialism of the Age of Enlightenment. They termed it mechanical and non-historical. They thought that "the attempt to understand it (the universe) upwards from pure mathematical physics to sociology is faced with a series of impassable breaks which are merely slurred over with a pious hope that ultimately we shall be able to 'calculate'."⁴ They aimed at something which will combine the strong points of both the great currents of philosophic thought. The outcome of this effort is Dialectical Materialism.

Marxian philosophy thus starts with two main ideas which compounded gives us its actual distinctive name. It claims to be materialist but it takes over from Hegelian idealism the conception of dialectic or the general law of development. Engels remarked that Marx and he were the only people "to rescue conscious dialectics from German idealist philosophy and apply it in the materialist conception of nature and history."⁵ In the preface to the *Capital*, Marx wrote that with Hegel dialectic stood on its head and Marx put it right side up.

In the preface to the second German edition of the *Capital* (Eden and Cedar Paul's translation), Marx explained himself thus :

"My own dialectical method is not only fundamentally different from the Hegelian dialectical method but is its direct opposite. For Hegel, the thought process (which he actually transforms into an independent subject, giving to it the name of 'idea') is the demiurge (creator) of the real ; and for him the real is only the outward manifestation of the idea. In my view, on the other hand, the ideal is nothing other than the material when it has been transposed and translated inside the human head."

Hegel had put forth the movement of 'ideas' as the ultimate reality whereas Marx meant by reality the movement and change in things. Hegel made the world around the external form of the idea ; Marx held the idea to be the reflection of the material world. Thus Hegelian spirit becomes Marxian matter but the same law of movement (dialectic) remained common. Marx sought the basis of society in economic organisation rather than in an idea of the Absolute Mind but to him as to Hegel being meant becoming. Marx continued to define dialectics as "the science of the general laws of motion both of the external world and of human thinking."⁶ It must also be remembered that unlike the old classical materialists of the Enlightenment, Marx held that while consciousness is derivative, it cannot be reduced simply to matter in a mechanical way. To a very large extent Marx continued to be a Hegelian.

The first problem which arises in this connection is why in spite of the retention of dialectics, Marxian philosophy insists on calling itself materialist.

Engels gave the answer in his booklet on Feuerbach. "Which is prior to the other ; spirit or nature ? Philosophers are divided into two great camps, according to the way in which they have answered this question. Those who declare that spirit existed before nature, and who in the last analysis therefore assume in one way or another that the world was created... have formed the idealist camp. The others, who regard nature as primary belong to the various schools of materialism." After quoting the above passage, Lenin added "any other use (in a philosophic sense) of the terms idealism and materialism is only confusing."⁷ And again, "materialism explains consciousness as the outcome of existence and not conversely."⁸

The argument advanced for accepting materialism is strictly practical. "Astronomically and geologically speaking, there was a time when being had no consciousness."⁹ Consciousness appeared with life — in itself only an episode in the history of

the world. "If the further question is raised : what then are thought and consciousness, and whence they come, it becomes apparent that they are products of the human brain and that man himself is a product of nature which has been developed in and along with its environment."¹⁰ It is also pointed out that everybody as a matter of fact assumes the truth of the materialist attitude. "The priority of a material universe is taken as given, given by the experience of each individual and by the cumulative experience of mankind, an experience expressed not so much in meditation or conscious verbal formulation, as in action and practice. The basis is laid on what people do, not in what people think."¹¹

The name materialism has got an additional advantage, it is said, because of its traditional associations. "The word reminds us of the continuity in the development of the naturalist instead of the supernaturalist concept of being."¹² Another explanation is that idealism is associated with "faith in a transcendental world, in the existence of a transcendental being."¹³

Finally, idealism and materialism are characterised as fundamentally opposed by their effect on action and practice. Revolutions proceed from materialist philosophies ; all reaction is grounded in idealist philosophy. The Idealist Theory of the State, for example, leads to absolutism of the state without even any reform in its structure.¹⁴ "As long as the ways of God are hidden from men,... or if this visible world is merely illusory or incalculable, then there is no call on individuals to leave their private occupations and join the first real conscious attempt at making human history."¹⁵ Contemporary experience is also appealed to in the attempt to expose the alliance between Idealism and reaction.¹⁶

Dialectical Materialism is thus classed under Materialism for two chief reasons – the acceptance of matter as the fundamental reality by all materialist systems and the close connection between Idealism and the existing social order. But there is at the same time a gulf between orthodox materialism and

Marxian philosophy. This is due to the retention of the dialectical method by the latter in the first place and also to Marx's theory of perception.

"The chief defect of all previous materialism," wrote Marx in "*Ludwig Feuerbach*," "including that of Feuerbach is that the object (*Gegenstand*), the reality, sensibility, is only apprehended under the form of the object (*Objekt*) or of contemplation (*Anschauung*) but not as human sensible activity or practice, not subjectively."¹⁷

Of course the conception of the activity of human thought is philosophically idealistic. But Marxism while admitting this activity rules out idealism on the ground that it ignores the actual material conditions of intellectual activity. Orthodox materialism in reducing thought to sensation swings to a position directly opposite to the idealist view and considered to be equally mistaken. Whatever might be its logical validity, a middle position is taken up by Marxist philosophy¹⁸

Marxism starts with the idea that everything changes and develops so that it is a mistake to view the world in terms of fixed concepts of metaphysics. Marxism also holds that the key to the world-process is dialectics which Engels defined as "nothing more than the science of the general laws of motions and development of nature, human society and thought."¹⁹

In a famous passage Lenin gave the following description of Marxian dialectic²⁰ :

"A development that repeats, as it were, the stages already passed, but repeats them in a different way, on a higher plane ('negation of negation') ; a development, so to speak, in spirals, not in a straight line ; a development in leaps and bounds, catastrophies, revolution ; 'intervals of gradualness' ; transformation of quantity into quality ; inner impulses for development, imparted by the contradiction, the conflict of different forces and tendencies reacting on a given body or inside a given phenomenon or within a given society ; interdependence, and the closest, indissoluble connection between all sides of every phenomenon (history disclosing ever new sides), a connec-

tion that provides the one world-process of motion proceeding according to law—such are some of the features of dialectics as a doctrine of evolution more full of meaning than the current one.”

In this connection it is to be remembered that in any attempt at a dialectical interpretation of social changes, an appropriate time-scale has first to be adopted. “An explosion in the time-scale of an atomic vibrator, is an extremely slow process; but from the relevant time-scale of the total duration of the explosive it is instantaneous.”²¹

Thus if a short view is taken of history, if the period selected is a small period, the process of the dialectic cycle may not be revealed adequately in its study. Again, the illustration of dialectical movement in a big span of time is bound to be different from the revelation of the same law in a smaller period. In other words, the examples of dialectical change in history or in nature would differ in accordance with the time-scale selected and in any analysis of nature and history, there is always what might be called a field of relevance. If any small portion of the field of nature or humanity is considered in isolation it may not thus be possible to demonstrate adequately in it the dialectic process. “Such a portion might be only a part of a larger process and changes in it only become understandable dialectically when the larger process is considered as a whole.”²² A time-scale or a field of relevance is of course an arbitrary selection but then the analysis of isolated portions of nature or history always involves some arbitrariness.

The philosophy of Marxism is dialectical because it adopts the Hegelian idea of evolution of nature, history and thought according to certain patterns and it is materialist because it assumes that matter is the ultimate reality while consciousness is derivative. The application of this general philosophy to history gives rise to Historical Materialism or the Materialist Conception of History.

The first question which ought to arise here is whether any philosophy of history is at all possible. It may be main-

tained that no generalisation can be made about history either because no theory can fit all the facts or because too little is known for any confident conclusions. If this is granted, discussion becomes impossible. But as a matter of fact there is always some conception of history present in the mind when history is written or thought of. Otherwise it is not possible to select and appreciate facts even. What is peculiar to Historical Materialism is that a particular conception of history is explicitly and emphatically assumed by it.²³

One philosophy of history is tacitly rejected by all historians—the theory of wholesale chance. This conception logically leads to the idea that anything might have happened at any time. But it is generally recognised that life is not mere chance for in that case statistical constants would have been impossible. The existence of tendencies in history is universally recognised. The history of an epoch may be said to move within a “narrow range of possibilities conditioned by an antecedent state of affairs.”²⁴

The Idealist conception of history also is no longer popular, but it is still a force. Croce's recent history²⁵ comes under this class but a more famous name is that of Spengler. Spengler's theory that spirit determines the nature of a culture gives rise to the natural question what determines spirit. Spirit of a people obviously cannot explain the different ideas and outlooks of different groups within the same people. The appearance and the order of appearance of different institutions like slavery, serfdom and capitalism cannot be explained by spirit.²⁶ About idealist theory in general the same objections apply. If the ultimate ideas are divine, control or anticipation of the future becomes impossible while practical life at every step contradicts faith in such superhuman force. If the ideas are human ideas and qualities, the difficulty is that if they are constant they cannot explain change and if they themselves are variable, they cannot explain their own genesis.²⁷ Idealist history tends thus to become departmental and particular, instead of general or universal.²⁸

Much more fashionable is a loose materialist view about history which is really much more rigid than the Marxist hypothesis. Some material factor is taken as the determining force in historical development. Draper and Huntington represent such a tendency. The material factor selected differs in different cases. It is climate or geography with Buckle, the nature of food with Feuerbach, race with Chamberlain. "The chief defect of all these materialist philosophies is the attempt to reduce the social to merely a complicated effect of the non-social."²⁹

The Marxian philosophy of history is distinct from a purely mechanical materialist interpretation of history. "The materialist doctrine," wrote Marx,³⁰ "that men are products of their environments and education, different men products of different environment and education forgets that the environment itself has been changed by man." This of course is the recognition of the role of human activity which is stressed by Marx's theory of perception and which distinguishes Marxism from a mechanical materialism. "What requires explanation is those turning-points in history at which (like qualitative changes in a chemical composition) a completely new element appears to emerge. And, it is precisely this act of historical creation that a mechanical determinism can neither forecast nor explain."³¹

This difference between Marxism and other materialist theories of history which colour more or less most modern histories is easily overlooked.

Engels formulated the idea of Historical Materialism introduced by Marx in two passages which might be quoted in part.

"The materialist conception of history starts from the principle that production and with production the exchange of its products, is the basis of every social order.... According to this conception, the ultimate causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought,... not in the philosophy but in the economics of the epoch concerned.... This also involves that the means through which the abuses that have

been revealed can be got rid of... are not to be invented by the mind, but discovered by means of the mind, in the existing material facts of production."³²

The Marxist, therefore, is required to analyse a given situation which appears as a unit with the aid of past and present observations. It is believed that a correct diagnosis will lead to the discovery of opposite features and thus suggest the future in the light of the general hypothesis of dialectics. The ability to do this, as in the case of Lenin, is hailed as the mark of real leadership.³³

The second passage³⁴ from Engels runs as follows: "It was seen that all past history was the history of class struggles, that these warring classes of society are always the product of the modes of production and exchange... that therefore the economic structure of society always forms the real basis from which, in the last analysis, is to be explained the whole superstructure of legal and political institutions, as well as of the religious, philosophical, and other conceptions of each historical period.... Now a materialist conception of history was propounded, and the way found to explain man's consciousness by his being, instead of, as heretofore, his being by his consciousness."

It is also to be remembered that materialism in Marx does not indicate only egoistic motives. The theory is not the embodiment of self-interest or a rejection of the fact that men pursue ideals. Historical Materialism points out the predominance of material factors in history and traces ideas and ideals to the situation which decides their survival and acceptance. Economic organisation, it is asserted, determines which ideals are to flourish; "the locus of all effective ideals is the class-struggle."³⁵ Marx could write without hesitation about non-economic ideas inspiring the proletariat in the class-war—"the proletariat which will not allow itself to be treated as canaille regards its courage, self-confidence, independence and sense of personal dignity, as more necessary than its daily bread."³⁶ Here there is no contradiction because Marxism recognises

what are called moral ideas as part of the fact of the struggle between classes. It says only that "Man's human nature is revealed only in a socially determined context"³⁷ and that "by acting on the external world and changing it, man changes his own nature." (Marx in *Capital*, Vol. I.) Selfishness is selfishness but its scope and consequently its effect changes according to the economic framework of society.

The idea of the class and the theory of relations between classes are possibly the central points in Marxism when it is stripped of all intellectual subtleties. The class struggle is the fundamental feature of Marxist thought and practice - the distinctive note in the movement as a whole.

A class is defined³⁸ "not as any sort of social grouping (according to which the definition would be meaningless) but a particular grouping characterised by a peculiar type of relationship to the means of production (e.g., owning and ownerless, owners of realty and owners of personalty). Antagonism, indeed, defined a class rather than was defined by it." Lenin defined a class as a "large group of people which differs according to the place it occupies in the historically definite system of social production, according to its relation to the means of production (which is usually also established and fixed by law) and finally according to the part they play in the social organisation of labour and the means of obtaining wealth."³⁹

The relation between different classes, it is emphasised, is independent of the will of those who participate in production. A man finds himself the member of a class and though a few individuals may change their status, this is not possible for a whole class without effecting a revolution. In modern society, for example, making one's own fortune or rising from the ranks like Ford or others is without any significance for the proletariat as a whole. Classes having different roles in production, "the antagonism between classes flows not from the consciousness (or lack of it) of individual members of the class but from the division of the fruits of production."⁴⁰ It follows from this that the class struggle is a concomitant

feature of division of society into classes. The possibility of an equitable distribution of the product between classes is denied because an abstract equity or justice does not exist ; each class is bound to have its own conception of justice. Moreover the proletariat is exploited by the capitalists (according to Marxian economics) under the law of surplus value. Ending such a state of things involves a revolution with the emergence of a new quality in social history. About revolutionary changes, the principle is laid down that "a revolution cannot be undertaken at any time, nor if undertaken, succeed, save under certain determinate conditions, all of which are necessary for victory but no one of which is sufficient."⁴¹ The situation in modern times has got this peculiarity that the struggle of the proletariat for emancipation cannot be successful with the abolition of class-society itself. Abolition of classes, a class-less social organisation thus becomes the object of the revolutionary class to-day which is thus supposed to serve the cause of the whole of mankind.

A class is a group but it becomes the most important group because economic organisation is more fundamental than any element in the cultural superstructure. Class-consciousness is the idea of loyalty to the class and the realisation of common interests which hold the economic group together. Class is fundamental in society because the Radical picture of the community as a collection of individuals seeking their atomic interests is a distortion and the outlook of most men is in fact coloured by class hopes and fears, class sympathies and prejudices.⁴²

There may be many classes in society to-day but Historical Materialism picks out two fundamental classes – the two camps to-day to which the subsidiary classes attach themselves. "Modern society is divisible into two great groups, the capitalist and the wage-earner. Of the one, the outstanding feature is the fact that he lives by owning ;... of the other, the dominating fact is that they live by and are mainly dependent upon wages. Marx is not concerned with minor features of distinc-

tion.... Marx does not deny the possibility of minor sub-divisions.... They are for him as insignificant as the fact that among capitalists some are successful and others unsuccessful... however the two great classes are sub-divided, one is united with itself by the fact that it lives by the sale of its labour, and the other by the fact that it owns, in its capital, the means of production."⁴³

Marx's historical analysis described above is remarkable for two things – a detailed analysis of the modern environment and the recognition of the proletariat as the real revolutionary force to-day. These are bound up with the conception of class and the class-struggle.

It is very generally assumed that the Marxist conception of history is rigidly deterministic and that the Marxist view about social development is a form of complete fatalism. This is accompanied also by the belief that in Historical Materialism the sole factor which is recognised is the economic factor. A study of the available literature qualifies these preconceptions to a considerable extent.

"Man makes his own history," wrote Marx,⁴⁴ "but he does not make it out of the whole cloth ; he does not make it out of conditions chosen by himself, but out of such as he finds close at hand." Here clearly enough Marx recognised history as an interaction between human activity and limiting conditions. In the same book, Marx also remarked that the "tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living." Surely here is a recognition of non-economic forces in their proper place in history.

Engels is even more explicit in his letters, which must be largely quoted in this connection.⁴⁵

"According to the materialist conception of history, the production and reproduction of real life constitutes in the last instance the determining factor of history. Neither Marx nor I ever maintained more. Now when some one comes along and distorts this to mean that the economic factor is the sole determining factor he is converting the former proposition in-

to a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis but the various factors of the superstructure... exercise an influence upon the historical struggles... in which, finally,... the economic movement asserts itself as necessary. Were this not the case, the application of the theory to any given historical period would be easier than the solution of a simple equation of the first degree." – Engels to Bloch, 1890.

"One could hardly, however, assert without pedantry that among the many petty principalities of North Germany, just Brandenburg was determined by economic necessity and not by other factors also... to become the great power.... It would be very hard to attempt to explain by economic causes without making ourselves ridiculous the existence of every petty German state of the past or present, or the origin of modern German syntax." – Engels to Bloch, 1890.

"What all these fellows lack is dialectic.... The whole great process develops itself in the form of reciprocal action, to be sure of very unequal forces, in which the economic movement is far and away the strongest, most primary and decisive. They (the critics) do not see that here nothing is absolute and everything relative. For them Hegel has never existed." – Engels to Schmidt, 1890.

"If Barth imagines that we deny all and every counteraction of the political, etc., reflexes of the economic movement upon that movement itself, he is simply contending against windmills. Let him take a glance at Marx's "Eighteenth Brumaire"... (or at *Capital*, Chapter 24) – "Why are we struggling for the political dictatorship of the proletariat, if political power has no economic effects?" – Engels to Schmidt. 1890.

"Only one point is lacking which Marx and I did not sufficiently stress and in relation to which we are equally to blame. We both placed and had to place the chief weight upon the derivation of political, legal and other ideological notions as well as the actions which they led up to, from fundamental economic facts. In consequence we neglected formal side, i.e., the way in which these ideas arose, for the

sake of the content. That gave our opponents a welcome occasion for misunderstanding. — Engels to Mehring, 1893.

"Men make their own history, but in a given, conditioning milieu, upon the basis of actual relations already extant, among which, the economic relations, no matter how much they are influenced by relations of a political and ideological order, are ultimately decisive, constituting a red thread which runs through all the other relations and enabling us to understand them." — Engels to Starkenburg, 1894.

From the above extracts a few points clearly emerge. The economic structure is claimed to be the basis, the framework, the red thread throughout all relations, in history ; it is the unifying and in the last analysis the controlling factor. But there is a vast superstructure and this very admission logically leads to the recognition of its interaction on economics as well as of its relatively independent formal character. Historical Materialism is not a monistic reduction of everything to a simple element as Plekhanov inclined to think ;⁴⁶ it is not a denial of variety in history. To say that history is nothing but economic activity, to say that all historical events can be explained in economic terms is contrary to the spirit of Historical Materialism though propagandists have occasionally forgotten this.

It is interesting to remember that even as far back as the beginning of his career, Lenin took the field against what was called Economism in Russia. In this trend of socialist thought was mingled a rigid determinism and the idea that the economic factor is the only element in history. Consequently, an attitude arose which regarded political struggle as the automatic reflection of economic development with the conclusion that a political party should follow, and not try to lead, the mass movement which spontaneously appeared out of economic conditions. Lenin firmly opposed this tendency in his writings, in the true tradition of Marx.

The Orthodox Marxists in Germany again expected the course of economic development to produce socialism auto-

matically. They forgot that "it could only produce by its own immanent movement the presuppositions of socialism... When Marx spoke of communism as being a result of a 'social necessity' he was referring to the resultant of a whole social process, one of whose components was the development of objective economic conditions, the other, the assertion of a revolutionary class-will,"⁴⁷ — Marx thus avoided fatalism. Communist analysis often confirms this point of view — for example, when it is said that Italy was objectively ready for social revolution in 1921 and Germany in 1923.

The charge of fatalism is also refuted by Mr. J. D. Bernal.⁴⁸ He maintains that there is not more teleology in Dialectical Materialism than in the law of mechanical motion. When a social system charged with internal contradictions changes, it will "change in general to another system which has for the moment fewer internal contradictions. In that sense and in that only its future is determinate."

A quotation from Lenin⁴⁹ might very well close this section of the subject: "It is necessary to be critical of it (the movement), to point out its dangers and defects, and aspire to elevate spontaneity to consciousness. To say that ideologists cannot divert the movement created by the interaction of environment and elements from its path is to ignore the elementary truth that consciousness participates in this interaction and creation."

At this stage the writer may be called upon to define his own points of criticism against Marxist thought. There are weak links in Marxism which theoreticians have neglected in their presentation of Marxist ideas. They will be set forth here very briefly and baldly because the object of this analysis is not a criticism or refutation of Marx.

At the very outset may be noticed the fact that Marxists insist on a division of all philosophy into the two camps of Idealism and Materialism rigidly distinct from each other. This is of course a matter of nomenclature, perhaps arbitrary. But this becomes important when Marxism is seen to be a

combination of elements from both groups – a grafting on of idealist dialectic outlook on materialist assumptions. This conjunction which Berdyaev called an attempt to reconcile what is not reconcilable, may theoretically be claimed as an example of synthesis, but Marxism finds itself in practical difficulties in maintaining its logical balance.

In the second place, the idea that dialectic rules the world is an assumption which is of course a matter of faith only. Hegel is responsible for it but the hypothesis that the development of the world is according to the dialectic pattern remains a hypothesis which attracts some and repels others. The operation of these laws in physical nature especially is rather difficult to trace in spite of Engels' effort in the *Anti-Duhring*. The reader may be referred to the elaboration of the objections to the triadic process by Prof. Carritt in the *Aspects of Dialectical Materialism* (pp. 135-40).

Similarly, the theory that the logical process of dialectics is applicable to history has been challenged, as a relic of idealistic system-making. Russell asks the pertinent question – is the world logical? Hegel believed this to be true but how far is the assumption valid? It may be admitted that a philosophy of social development must be present in every history but the suspicion persists that this may only be an abstraction after all. Engels argued in his *Anti-Duhring* that dialectic development is established by historical observation. "The process" (in the *Capital*) "is a historical one and if it is at the same time a dialectical process, this is not Marx's fault."⁵⁰ Again, "this fact" (in the *Capital*) "is a proof of the correctness of the Hegelian law."⁵¹ But undoubtedly the dialectic bias permeates the Marxist mind, in its approach to history and its study of facts.

Even if the dialectical hypothesis is accepted there will remain the problem of its actual application and the selection of the field of relevance. Ingenious minds may use the triadic pattern to prove different things and such interpretations may very well differ from each other. Carritt asks the question⁵²

why "change must always arise from the interaction of contraries" because opposite and dissimilar elements may very well be termed contraries arbitrarily. "The mind tends to feign symmetrical patterns in nature."

Historical Materialism asserts that all past history is a history of class struggles.⁵³ But this assumption has not been definitely proved and not adequately established by a sufficient analysis of the past. The hypothesis may be true in a very general sense but, as Cole pointed out in a recent book,⁵⁴ all ordinary history or what is usually called history practically remains to a very large extent directly unaffected by this explanation of historic causation. Marxists envisage history in terms of ages and centuries while the ordinary scale is much less comprehensive. Another point may be made in this connection. The Materialist Conception of History concludes that the transition from stage to stage in history involves a leap or break. The Communists translate this into the dogma of the necessity of a violent revolution. But past experience cannot always be interpreted in this way. The transformation of feudalism was not universally a violent process.

If the analysis of Marxism as presented in the pages above on the basis of quotations from authoritative literature is at all near the truth, the element of faith which permeates the Marxist movement must be fully recognised. Indeed it was chiefly the orthodox German Social Democrats who distorted Marxist ideas into a colourless fatalistic 'scientific' attitude open to serious criticism. As a real objective science, Marxism can hardly bear all criticism. As a *weltanschauung*, it becomes in the last analysis a thing of faith which claims to expose other schools of thought as pseudo-scientific and claims its own analysis to be more objective. At the same time a common basis for mere intellectual discussion disappears and classes are left face to face, in the field of thought as in the actual world.

Marx the man fits in perfectly with this picture of Dialectical Materialism. He was not a pure scholar but also and

primarily an intense agitator "with a passionate sympathy for the victims of the Industrial Revolution"⁵⁵ which is hardly objective according to accepted standards to-day. He was a revolutionist who never concealed his class-approach to problems even in philosophy and economics.⁵⁶ Marx never denied his faith for the sake of gaining laurels as a detached scientific intellectual, because he did not believe in such a being so far as studies which touched society were concerned. In individual cases, amongst communists also, almost universally, it is the faith which attracts first, not the philosophy.

It seems to follow from the above that the widespread idea that Communism stands or falls with its philosophy is not literally true. In the last resort the popular idea of Marxism as essentially a series of assumptions, conclusions and suggestions for the revolutionary proletarian movement is correct. The philosophy of Dialectical Materialism however remains of vital interest not merely for explaining origins but also for holding the series together and developing it when necessary.

NOTES

1. *Anti-Duhring* (Martin Lawrence edition), p. 153.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-29.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
4. *Aspects*, pp. 94-95.
5. *Anti-Duhring*, p. 15.
6. Lenin, *Teachings of Karl Marx*, p. 20.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
10. *Anti-Duhring*, pp. 44-45.
11. *Aspects*, p. 91.
12. Hecker, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
13. Berdyaev, *The End of Our Time*.

14. Joad, *Modern Political Theory*, pp. 13-17.
15. *Aspects*, p. 93.
16. Communists refer in this connection to Fascism, Nazism and Gandhism, as illustrations.
17. Russell, *Freedom and Organisation*, pp. 220-21.
18. Hook, *op. cit.*, p. 88.
19. *Anti-Duhring*, p. 160.
20. Lenin, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
21. *Aspects*, p. 113.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
23. Dobb, *On Marxism To-day*, pp. 11-12.
24. Hook, *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx*, pp. 107-11.
25. Croce, *History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century*.
26. Hook, *op. Cit.*, pp. 76-77.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 111-13.
28. Dobb, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.
29. Hook, *op. cit.*, p. 115.
30. Quoted in Hook, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
31. Dobb, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
32. *Anti-Duhring*, p. 300.
33. Hecker, *Moscow Dialogues*, p. 126.
34. *Anti-Duhring*, pp. 32-33.
35. Hook, *op. cit.*, p. 92.
36. Quoted in Hook, *op. cit.*, p. 92.
37. Hook, *op. cit.*, p. 85.
38. Dobb, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
39. Hecker, *op. cit.*, p. 130.
40. Hook, *op. cit.*, p. 120.
41. Hook, *op. cit.*, p. 120.
42. Lindsay, *Karl Marx's Capital*, p. 45.
43. Laski, *Communism*, pp. 67-68.
44. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, p. 9.
45. The letters are printed in full in the Appendix to Hook's volume.
46. Hook, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-41.

47. Hook, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
48. *Aspects of Dialectical Materialism*, pp. 114-15.
49. Lenin, *Works*, Vol. IV, p. 67.
50. *Anti-Duhring*, p. 152.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 143.
52. *Aspects*, p. 137.
53. *Communist Manifesto*, by Marx and Engels.
54. *What Marx Really Meant*.
55. Lindsay, *Karl Marx's Capital*, pp. 10-11.
56. Hook, *op. cit.*, p. 66. It may be noticed that this active side in Marx was not grasped by the 'Orthodox' Marxists of the German Social Democratic Movement who pictured Marx merely as a research scholar in the British Museum.

THE COMING OF MARXISM

The ideal of an egalitarian economy did lift its head occasionally in older times. Divorced from the material evolution of those days, the ideal could not naturally enough be realised. The Greek communist speculation was quite limited and did not range beyond the idea of equality of all grades amongst the possessing classes, the slaves and the propertyless being left out of the vision. Mediaeval communism was meant for small ideal communities, the fraternity of the monks for example ; there was hardly any thought for the removal of inequality in the bigger world outside ; even the monasteries lived on the exploitation of the cultivators ; the Christian compensation lay in the dream of the equality of all souls in the eyes of God and the hope of 'a pie in the sky.' In the transition epoch from mediaevalism, some attempts were made to found communist colonies, chiefly in the areas discovered beyond the seas ; such isolated experiments were doomed to failure. A communist ideal of a 'new society', classless in character, appeared in the Digger Movement during the English Revolution ; the prevalent bourgeois atmosphere rendered Wubstabet's efforts futile. No such endeavour in pre-Capitalist periods could indeed survive in the surrounding inclement material conditions. Even within a communist group on a small scale, economic inequality was bound to reappear soon enough. Unreal schemes could hardly materialise. In the non-European world similarly, communistic thinking was not absent but was equally unfruitful.

True communism could arise only out of the material contradictions of a capitalist society. It is no wonder therefore that socialist thought took shape first only in early 19th cen-

tury. The passion for equality for all men, economic equality, became a real force with men. In the task of formulating a modern socialist theory, the pioneers were Saint Simon and Faurier in France, and Robert Owen in England.

In the realm of pure thought, without any action, they had been anticipated by the scholar and thinker, Thomas More, three centuries earlier. More had hit upon most of the fundamental features of communist idealism, without any corresponding program to be pursued. The early-19th century socialists were dubbed by Marx as Utopians in memory of More's renowned Utopia, the picture of an imaginary communist commonwealth.

The early-19th century Socialist thought may be regarded as a natural culmination of the earlier Liberal and Democratic theories. Liberalism appeared in the mercantile bourgeois atmosphere and duly reflected in theory the interests of the early bourgeois. It held that absolute monarchy was an impediment to progress ; this must have been because the centralised monarchical authority was the last shield for the feudal lords and carefully protected their privileges and ascendancy. A constitutional government breaking through the unlimited royal power would pave the way for the bourgeois mastery over society. Constitutional Liberalism started first in England and virtually triumphed in the 17th century English Revolution ; it spread next to the American Colonies ; the Anglo-French 'Enlightenment of the 18th century dislodged mediaeval thinking. In the early days of the Great French Revolution, constitutional liberalism was still in full swing. Feudal privileges were abolished ; legal equality was decreed for all as a law of Nature. Government was entrusted to an elected Assembly ; everyone was assured the legal right of free expression of opinion ; noble birth would carry no advantage in law. Liberalism acquire the French connotation of 'liberty-equality-fraternity'. In the 19th century it flowed over all Europe in force, and spread out to the whole world.

The essence of liberal Egalitarianism was the equality in

the law-courts, the removal of the legal distinction in the status between aristocrats and commoners. But that did not mean that the liberals believed in political equality for all, or favoured the right of voting in elections for everyone. The bourgeois at first naturally wanted to confine the direct control of the administration in their own hands. Thus in England and even in the First Constitution of the French Constitution, the franchise was given only to the men of property, on the assumption that political responsibility cannot be presumed in the property less. Yet the total revolution necessary for establishing the new order uprooting the old would require the setting in motion the entire people. After a taste of power again the people at large would not easily give up a share in the power. Must not the vaunted 'legal equality' imply equality in the suffrage? Thus Liberalism of the old day found at its side. Democracy as the new ideal Democrats demanded political in addition to legal equality, the right of votes for all. The French Jacobins made this their battle cry, the English Radicals followed suit. And Democracy followed in the foot-steps of Liberalism all over the world.

Democrats are convinced that universal suffrage would leave nothing more to be demanded, that every other social objective can be achieved through its mechanism. If people really want something, why can not they obtain it by exercising their franchise? Capitalists know however that their control over the economy would enable them to accomplish their aims and protect their interests, even under a democratic regime. The greater part of a man's life is governed by economic arrangements; the control of the economy by the owning classes would inevitably secure their mastery over the rest. The Democratic State in such conditions would run at the behest of the capitalists, universal franchise would not bring real freedom for all. The experience of a century has now proved that political equality is not of much avail without economic equality and does not greatly alter the fate of

common man. The great distinction of the first Socialists was their grasp of this truth even in the early days of democracy. They raised therefore the cry for economic equality and did not remain content with the liberal legal equality and the democratic political equality.

Thus Socialist theory demanded that the difference between the rich and the poor must be eliminated, that poverty must end for all, that private ownership must go. Yet, the early Socialist thought had many shortcomings. They had no conception as to how economic equality was to be reached. Like the 18th century rationalists they believed that man is guided by Reason. So they thought that everyone had to be won over by the argument that the full egalitarian society was the noblest ideal and that this will automatically bring in such a new society. Even the capitalists must be converted to a change of heart so that they also would join in building the ideal reasonable society of the future. They did not understand that, leaving out exceptional individuals, an entire class pursues its own interests. The utopian socialists mostly ignored the objective clash between different class-interests. They did not stop to consider that the capitalist class will have little urge to end social conditions which satisfy its specific interests. It was beyond the vision of the utopians that the real force behind the socialist revolution could only be the oppressed dispossessed working class. They remained therefore indifferent to the labour movement. Indeed, socialism was a new religion to the utopians, and they thought in terms of converting the people, one by one, to this new faith. That meant in effect waiting for the 'change of heart' of the capitalists with whom lay the power in society.

Even today, many socialists who consider themselves progressive, experienced, and wise still in many countries cling to this ancient prejudice. Marx called this attitude Utopian, that is indulging in unreal dreams. The early Utopians busied themselves in working out the details of the golden age to come, instead of facing the hard concrete reality.

TOWARDS MARX

Yet, a great labour movement was already on. With the march of Capitalism, the exploited working class had turned to open battle. By the early 19th century, trade-unions, the organizations of the workers themselves, had taken the field in England. Robert Owen did join the agitation for a while till his patience gave way. In France also, strike followed strike. In the French Revolution, Baboeuf attempted to found a first socialist party. But the workers still limited themselves to protests against a oppression; they went on strikes which ended in violent disorder; they took revenge in smashing machines. The working class had not so far grasped the ideal of a socialist society. Their agitation was still a mere blind fruitless protest. Some however thought that the democratic objective of the universal suffrage would solve all their problems. The well-known Chartist movement in England and the Social-democratic campaign of Louis Blanc in France were powerful expressions of such sentiment.

It was Marx and Engels who brought together the Socialist ideal and the Labour Movement. The Communist Manifesto of 1848 proclaimed the union. In Marx's hands, socialist thought shed its utopian dreaming and turned into a scientific theory on the one hand. He argued that the abolition of poverty can come only through the abolition of classes. Naturally the capitalists would resist, but the way to overcome the resistance lay in organising all the exploited under proletarian leadership to build up the classless society. He argued that the abolition of private property means in essence the social ownership of the principal means of production. And production by machines must be taken away from the owners but the technique had to be used for the benefit of the whole society, for that was the way to produce in abundance. Economic equality must not mean equality in poverty. On the other hand, Marx pointed out the true path for the labour movement as well. It was not to be confined to mere blind helpless protest. It was to fight for establishing the socialist

society. Thus Marx brought into existence the real Socialist movement of modern times.

With endless toil Marx and Engels devoted themselves throughout their life to building up modern socialism. In their writings we find the best formulation of the different aspects of the Socialist theory of today. They created in the first place the new philosophy of Dialectical Materialism, the exposition of the socialist world-outlook. Secondly, the Materialist Conception of History is their unforgettable achievement. In economic analysis thirdly, they demonstrated the extraction of Surplus Value, the particular form of capitalist exploitation ; indicated the inherent contradictions of a capitalist society ; traced its line of evolution ; and pointed out the probable ultimate transformation. Fourthly, in the domain of politics, they revealed the essential character of the States ; outlined an effective program to help the almost inevitable revolution ; preached the necessity of a proletarian dictatorship after the change-over ; taught the proletariat the flexibility of tactics while adhering unwaveringly to the central objective.

Marx and Engels illustrated all the different necessary forms of Socialist Action as well. They laboured to prevent the trade unions, the specific organization of the working class, from swimming in the tide of spontaneity, from drifting away the political struggle ; Economism was a deviation from their teachings in this respect. Trade Unions were to be the instruments of awakening the class-consciousness of the workers and of organising them ; they were the 'schools' for teaching class-struggle and the necessity of socialism to the proletariat ; they were the forums for forging the closest links between socialists and working masses. Marx and Engels realised secondly the need for an independent specific Party the Working Class ; they endeavoured to build such a Party themselves, though the circumstances then were not propitious ; the Manifesto did aim at such a Party ; in later times they encouraged the organization of mass socialist parties in different countries.

They freely gave their advice and directions in this matter ; in Germany and France specially, they tried to solve each difficulty and crisis as they arose ; unappreciated at the time, their letters to different socialist leaders constitute today a treasure-house of rich thinking for the benefit of all communists. Thirdly, Marx and Engels were the first to try to link up the labour movements in different lands to guide them on a common road ; the First International was founded in 1864 for this purpose, and though after ten years unfavourable circumstances led to its disbanding, its memory and the ideal of international proletarian unity has remained green in socialist tradition. Fourthly, Marx and Engels kept in view the necessity of the proletariats unity with the other exploited classes, the necessity sometimes of an understanding between the socialists and the other progressive groups ; this was attempted in the 1848 revolts and expressed clearly in the Communist Manifesto itself.

In all these ways, Marx and Engels gave a definite modern shape to both the Theory and Practice of the Socialist Movement. And this makes them immortal in history.

Deviations of many kinds, wrong opinions and mistaken courses of action, have always dogged Scientific Socialism, that is Communism. Many of the deviations were identified and fought by Marx and Engels. Thus the early socialists did preach the gospel of the new society, free from poverty and inequality, but they carefully kept aloof from revolutionary struggle ; Marx pungently ridiculed their Utopian. On the other hand, Marx did not spare Blanquism and called it a childish approach ; Blanqui and his followers had the habit of rushing into indiscriminate revolutionary action at the slightest provocation, irrespective of the concrete situation ; Marx pointed out that revolution, like war, had its own technique, that a class-struggle cannot be won by sheer enthusiasm, by emotional urge merely.

In Germany, the Lassalleian Social Democracy remained absorbed in pure politics and parliamentary agitation ; it con-

centrated all energy on winning elections and conducting campaigns for legislature-reforms. Marx criticised this trend very sharply, for he thought that, though the Social Democrats repeated revolutionary catchwords, they were in effect engaged in repairing the edifice of capitalism. Yet on the other hand Marx never tired of criticising the absorption in direct action of Anarcho-Syndicalism which presented an ultrarevolutionary front against pure political reformism ; he fought persistently against Proudhon and Bakunin. The true Anarchists cared little for systematic organization ; they had no faith at all in political struggles ; they demanded the immediate abolition of the State ; they thought that, if the workers' resentment against the established order could be adequately fanned, the consequent violent disorders would lead us to the goal. The Syndicalists believed of course in organising the workers, but they thought that strikes were sufficient to bring in revolution ; they had at least no faith in building a workers' party or seeking a unity with the peasants or the other exploited groups.

It is possible to divide all deviations from Marxian Socialism into two broad categories — ultra-right and ultra-left, conservative and violently radical. Marx showed however that the two types were but the two faces of the same unreal understanding ; mild respectable moderation and violent aggressive extremism, differing ever so much in outward poses, were in truth the props of the existing state of things. This was paved conclusively, later on, by the experience of the Russian Bolsheviks. In our own country also, it is a familiar sight to see in all the deviations a curious, and often ridiculous, amalgam of ultra-rightist and ultra-leftist words and actions.

After the death of Marx and Engels, capitalism reached a new stage to which Lenin gave the name Imperialism. Marx had anticipated the development, a proof indeed of his extraordinary analytical powers. But Imperialism unfolded itself effectively only with the new century and its clear characterization must be credited to Lenin. In this account

shines forth both Lenin's complete mastery of Marxism and his remarkable capacity for expanding it to cover a new situation.

Imperial expansion of course is in history no new thing. Still, empire-building is not the same as Lenin's Imperialism. In modern Capitalist Imperialism, Lenin identified five specific features. First, in the sphere of capitalist production, the old free competition is being largely replaced by monopolistic economic control exercised by a handful of capitalists; the powerful institutions of monopoly, trusts and cartels, are swallowing up the earlier small capitalist units. Secondly, bank capital and the capital of the individual factories are no longer independent of each other; the two combine into what may be called finance-capital which is becoming the directive force in capitalist society; the authorities of the big banks extend their tentacles over machine production, thereby bringing the entire social capital under the grip of a few monopolists. Thirdly, the surplus capitals of the strong advanced states no longer earn enough profits within their respective countries, and are therefore exported to weak and backward territories where foreign capitalists can still extract an immense gain; thus, in addition to sending out their products to the colonial markets, additional profits are squeezed out by investments from abroad. Fourthly, groups of capitalist monopolists are sharing out the world into various areas, the different spheres of interest. Fifthly, the Great Powers have partitioned the whole earth into their respective spheres of influence, leaving no further fields for economic penetration.

Lenin argued that the internal contradictions pointed out by Marx in capitalist production have lost nothing of their validity in the conditions of the new stage of development, Imperialism. Rather they may be said to have intensified. The first contradiction is between socialised labour in production and the appropriation of the products by individual capitalists. Under the aegis of capitalist imperialism, production labour is becoming even more organised, more social;

the advance in technique is making labour more collective, more centralised. The ownership of the products of the other hand, is passing into yet fewer capitalist hands, the ranks of the real appropriators is thinning. This can only deepen, and not lessen, the antagonism Marx indicated. The second contradiction is between organization within the factory unit and anarchy in society at large. The spread of monopoly control does not obviate this and this antagonism must remain so long as production is run for profit, and profit only. The third contradiction is between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and under imperialism this antagonism also cannot obviously abate.

Marx had held that capitalism would break down under its own inherent contradictions. Lenin therefore concluded that, since under imperialism all the contradictions had been intensified, the breakdown must be imminent. He said that imperialism was only the last stage that implied that capitalism had reached a moribund condition. Not only has the conflict between the capitalist class and the proletariat within a country was now in a critical phase ; the different empires are also clashing more and more. The world is not endless, and areas for fresh expansion were no longer available. The scramble among the Great Powers for territories and markets was unavoidable in consequence. Under imperialism, one empire was sure to try to corner another and to re-partition the earth if possible. War thus becomes inevitable and its nature would be an Imperialist war. In the course of such a war, the proletariat would get the chance to bring off revolution. Lenin proclaimed that the area of Capitalist Imperialism was bound to turn out to be an epoch of Imperialist Wars and Proletarian Revolutions.

There was another danger for Imperialism. The spirit of resistance was sure to be aroused in backward countries and the people there would rise in revolt against the imperialist exploiters. Their fight would be a struggle for national emancipation from imperialist chains. Lenin in analysing the

concrete contemporary situation revealed indeed great skill and uncommon ability in the application of Marxism.

Communist theory also was further developed and enriched in Lenin's hands. The leaders of the Second International of the socialists, founded in 1889, had no such capacity. Kautsky and Hilferding among them interpreted Imperialism in quite a different fashion. Imperialism, they said, was only transformed capitalism, not its last stage but its reconstitution. With the fading out of the anarchy of competition, capitalism was becoming stabler, more firm, better regulated. They added of course that reconstituted capitalism is only an anticipation of socialism ; but capitalism will not collapse under the pressure of contradictions, rather society will reach socialism gradually, through reorganised capitalism itself, in a democratic manner. The theory of Kautsky and Hilferding arrived at a finished form after the First World War and German Social Democracy followed a wrong path under their direction. The plight of Germany today is the outcome of a wrong policy, a standing illustration of the result of wrong interpretation and a mistaken theory. In their attitude towards Imperialism, Kautsky and Hilferding forgot all Marx's teaching on the contradictions of capitalism.

Even before this, Marxism was being wrongly interpreted and distorted. Lenin applied a common term - opportunism - to such deviations. Even within capitalism, the upper strata of labour enjoy relatively high wages, so that they are much better-off than the mass of the workers. They naturally tend to forget the exploitation and run after their own specific though temporary interests. This is the true source of Opportunism. Technically, Opportunism means the endangering of the total and broad-interests of the entire working class in the idle pursuit of small gains of a section. The change of tactics in a new concrete situation is not Opportunism, though it is often called so. The upper-grade workers may get a small part of the imperialist plunder and their representatives tend to forget and distort Marx and dream in an oppor-

tunist illusion of making the workers the partners of capitalists. Opportunism first arose in Victorian England when labour leaders in their zeal for sharing imperial profits ignored Marx and Engels. It spread to other lands along with the advance of Imperialism.

Bernstein argued in Germany that much of Marx's teachings had become obsolete at the turn of the century. He proposed a 'revision' of Marx in the changed context. At that time, Kautsky sharply against Bernstein's Revisionism, but in course of time he himself was affected by the new trend. Revisionism to some extent appeared also in Russian Menshevism, in a special form of course. The majority of the Parties in the Second International were deflected from the Marxian path, under the spell of the new ideas. Lenin's great achievement was that he could stick to the essence of Marxism, and this was proved in the First World War. The Bolshevik triumph in the Russian Revolution was not an accidental stroke of luck. It was rooted in the correct application of Marxian fundamentals in the objective situation of the period.

Apart from the analysis of Imperialism and the battle against Opportunism, Lenin's contributions to communism are very many, of which two deserve special mention.

Lenin was the first to found a modern Communist Party, a model which is still followed all over the world. The earlier model had been the massive German Social Democracy. This was not different in structure from the political parties of the other classes, and admission was open to all sympathisers. Lenin made his Party into a party of tested cadres; each member had to work in a Party unit under the directions of the Party; the Bolsheviks were like a disciplined army as it were.

The other contribution of Lenin was the determination of the tasks of the Communists in a bourgeois-democratic revolution. Such revolutions had already taken place in West Europe in the 18th Century; Marxists there now naturally

busied themselves with the proletarian revolution. But in backward countries the bourgeois-democratic revolutions were still due to come; and socialists usually were indifferent as they thought that such revolutions would merely destroy feudal institutions and ideas in the interests of capitalism merely. They thought that the leadership of and responsibility for the bourgeois-democratic revolution vested naturally in the bourgeois class. Lenin argued on the other hand that the proletariat and its Party must be vitally interested in the coming bourgeois-democratic revolution, for this, in clearing away the ancient rubbish, would in effect materially facilitate labour's progress. The proletariat must take the lead in this revolution, for the bourgeoisie in a backward country must be half-hearted and lukewarm and would leave the revolution incomplete, and the proletariat alone can make it a success. Moreover, proletarian leadership in the bourgeois-democratic revolution was bound to hasten its transition to the socialist revolution itself. This is why Lenin set such importance to the forgoing of the proletariat's alliance with the peasantry which did not much interest the 'orthodox' Marxists.

The subsequent flow of events has demonstrated the truth of Marxism and of Lenin's development of the theory. The Russian Revolution was the vindication of the Marxian analysis at the bar of History.

*REVISION-REITERATION-EXPANSION**

Internal conflict is a noticeable feature in the history of Marxian thoughts for dialectical contradictions do not spare the forward march of the Party. A rather harsh term – 'Revisionism' – has gained much currency recently ; emphasising a certain part of the Moscow Declaration, many hold without a question that revisionism is the main danger and to fight it is the Central Communist duty today. We hear constantly that the slightest departure from the beaten track is revisionism, though no scientific analysis is presented as to what the thing amounts to exactly. Revisionism thus becomes a mere word of abuse. 'Dogmatism' is yet another term to which the same comments apply. But since the 1960 Declaration considered it to be a main problem only in certain circumstances, many affect to believe that this is not a matter for serious concern and that it is a mere simple exception to the general rule. Therefore, after recognising dogmatism as a possible deviation formally, we turn all energies against the 'main enemy', that is revisionism. Thus any doubt that the emphasis of 1960 may not be equally true in 1963 is at once branded as a violation of the Moscow Declaration – as the Chinese leadership loudly proclaims. They think it wise to keep silent over the fact they themselves violate other parts of the Declaration. Even experienced senior leaders tend to forget the simple truth that the dialectical approach must contradict one-sidedness ; they are misled by their own obstinacy and particular interests.

Marxism is of course a continuous struggle and a ceaseless battle is waged in the minds of its followers as to what is the correct policy and what only a distortion. There is no point in regretting this, for such is the nature of scientific advance.

But regret is unavoidable when we meet at every step oversimplifications of Marxism. This is 'vulgarization', against which the Founders of Marxism had fought always. At the height of excitement, a certain degree of over-simplification indeed is unavoidable in popular minds, but that must be counteracted through analytical thought on the part of the thoughtful at least. Yet it is this lack of analysis which is depressing in our country, a lack which turns Marxism into something immobile. Our leaders encourage static thought which helps to preserve the status quo. It is safer far to turn away from questions and discussion and seek solace in catchwords. It is such a respite from mental exertions if one can silence by abuse all inconvenient questions fixing on them a label of reproach.

2

The student of history will find in Marxism three trends — which may be called revision, reiteration, and expansion. The essence of the current term 'revisionism' is the belief that some or all of the fundamental principles of Marxism require a Revision now, that further observation has revealed certain flaws in them or that they have become antiquated. The essence of what is called 'dogmatism' is only Reiteration, a loud repetition once again of some old conclusions, the belief that nothing has happened to modify them now. Expansion is, on the other hand, an admission after full analysis of some modifications, but its essence is that fundamental principles do not have to be changed; what is modified is the application, outward manifestations in the program of actions which of course depends on the actual situation. Since the world around does not stand-still, and our analytical ability deepens, it becomes obviously necessary to review yesterday's conclusions again and again. There is nothing shameful in Expansion, for science itself is in motion and Marxism takes pride on its scientific approach. Marxism certainly is not a more emotional impulse.

If we admit Marxism to be a science, its expansion is an

inevitable and necessary trend, the absence of which will only stultify it. We see in science that with our increasing knowledge particular theories do rise and fall, and explanation become fuller with the change in the real situation. This does not pervert Science as such, for the essence of science lies in the scientific, the analytical process of science. An alteration in some specific theory does not vitiate the fundamentals of Science. The harm comes only when we abandon scientific method, for instance if we resort to supra-natural factors, beyond scientific analysis, in explaining the nature of the outer universe. In Marxist 'expansion' also, a particular theory, some temporary tentative conclusions, a directive suited to specific conditions may have to be modified on account of changes in the concrete situation or because of fuller knowledge. This is not a surrender of fundamental principles and beliefs, just as the steady progress of scientific information has not rendered Science itself futile or out-of-date.

Such a trend of true expansion is indeed the life and soul of Marxism. But when fundamental principles, the Marxist method of analysis, its world-outlook are changed, this is no longer 'expansion' but 'revision.' And when any particular modification in application gives rise to a shout that all is lost, when particular conclusions are confused with the fundamental approach, we encounter 'reiteration.' If expansion is an inherent force in Marxism, both revision and reiteration must be regarded as contrary to and deviations from Marxism. Indeed, in the entire history of Marxism, we can observe a persistent struggle against both the revisionist and dogmatist deviations. To call one of the two the 'main danger' is unscientific and improper and it happens only when a compromise is effected practically for sheer unity. Even if momentarily one of the two looms as the immediate main danger, the other is sure to lift its head at the very next moment. To preserve the scientific purity of Marxism, we have to be on guard against both dangers all the time. In reserving fire against one enemy, we are apt to fall in the arms of the other.

The unreality of over-simplification is here obvious. Reiteration or dogmatism is just an impulse of resistance. It is directed against all change, whether revisionist, or expansionist, and lumps both into the same guilty camp of revisionism. It carefully picks out all the quotations from the classics of Marxism against the revisionist deviation in indiscriminate fury. That it is necessary to keep in view the totality of the classics and the objective analysis in them is clearly forgotten. It is easy enough to suppress other quotations and arguments in the classics before the gullible people. Is it not ridiculous to consider such degradation of the science of Marxism in an orgy of over-simplification not a main danger?

The other risk in over-simplification is of course revisionism. If some change becomes necessary, we may rush to abandon everything. This is no more attack on dogmatism, it also runs counter to the essence of expansion. Under the formula - 'doubt everything' - we distrust all formulations without stopping to consider whether they are fundamental or indeed unscientific. Needless to say, in pure agnostic views, nothing at all can be 'proved'; abstract agnosticism will easily 'disprove' all science. The revisionist trend usually aims at revising some fundamental idea of Marx or other, but it is likely to weaken all of them as they are firmly interlinked in Marx's world-outlook.

Other examples of over-simplification are not difficult to find. We are repeatedly told that revisionism is equivalent to opportunism. The definition of opportunism in Marxist thought however is endangering the total interest and future of the working class in pursuit of some temporary advantage. It is clear therefore that both the deviations mentioned above can turn into opportunism. For why should we believe that dogmatism in its turn cannot injure the future of the movement? If sunk in the mire of sectarianism we lose possible allies, would that not also affect the total interest? Yet we are presented with the simple untenable equation - revisionism = opportunism.

We also hear that revisionism means conservative right reaction, while its opposite extreme is inevitably left-wing revolutionism. But when Lenin expanded or developed Marxism to make it a tool for the preparation and accomplishment of revolution in the epoch of Marxism, Kautsky and others charged him exactly with the revision of Marx. And their attitude was clearly that of an 'orthodox' dogmatic reiteration of their version of Marxism, for they held that a proletarian revolution was not practicable in backward countries, that the peasantry could not be rallied, that Marx never dreamed of revolution starting in the benighted East etc. Ideas which had not been established in Marxist circles then were naturally dubbed revisionist in spite of their leaning towards revolution. How can we indeed argue that revision can come only from the right wing? Is it not equally possible to distort fundamentals from the left? For example let us take the concept of revolution itself. Marxism understands by revolution a big, fundamental, sweeping, and rapid transformation and the consequent transfer of state-power. The forward motion is naturally uneven, and it is quite possible to pass from slow change to a sudden 'leap', and revolution is just such a leap. But the exact way in which the revolution will be effected is not a part of Marxist fundamentals, for surely this will depend on the concrete objective situation. 'Correcting' this Marxian approach from the left, the proposition is presented to us that revolution can not come except through armed insurrections, through open violent war. Marx and Engels had thought it quite possible that, in some of the advanced non-martial nations in the West, revolution might come without a Civil war: it was only in the era of imperialism that Lenin asserted that revolutions must be violent; in the post-Lenin-period, when the socialist camp is getting stronger and stronger, is it a deviation from fundamentals to think that in some cases revolution may come without an armed civil war? After all, bourgeois revolutions, following the initial Great

French Revolution, did come in some cases without armed insurrection.

Does history lack instances in which aggressive left-wing revolutionism actually injured Marxism in practice? Did not Marx himself had to fight long enough against the indiscriminate revolutionary pose of Blanquism? Could Marx ever forgive Bakunin's revolutionary anarchism? Did Marx and Engels consider it less dangerous than the pure reformism of the right wing Lassalleans? Did not Stalin wield his sharp pen against the revolutionary Anarcho-Syndicalism? And did not Lenin shatter in debate the 'infantile disease' of left-wing communism? It was in the name of orthodox Marxism that the Trotskyite left-wing tried to hinder the 'Socialism in One Country' concept of Lenin and Stalin as well as the concept of 'Peaceful Co-existence' in international relations. And, it is again the ultra-revolutionism of China's leadership today which is splitting our international communist movement. Therefore, another simple equation—leftism=Marxism—is equally invalid.

In the excitement of over-simplification, we also hear that revisionism is an expression of bourgeois ideology. But did not Lenin argue repeatedly that ultra-revolutionism is yet another expression of the very same ideology? Everyone must have noticed the tall talk of revolution in petty bourgeois circles. Marx was never misled by ultra-leftist outbursts; this he rejected as firmly as reformist illusions. In truth, neither the ultra-rightists nor the ultra-leftists are genuine Marxists. In analytical insight, both these apparently contradictory thought-currents belong to the same source, and thus the historic stand of Marxism has been to fight both deviations equally on the whole. The charm of over-simplification easily leads us astray, for an education in basic Marxism is now sadly neglected. We forget that ultra-leftism also springs from bourgeois sentiment.

3

Any ideology, which claims to be scientific, cannot afford to stand still and merely repeat ~~its~~ stock phrases. It must try constantly for a deeper analysis of the concrete situation, for a more penetrating insight into the objective environment. Thereby it becomes only richer and fuller. This is indeed the way of all science, because such an approach never hurts the basic method. It requires an alert mind, an analytical approach. The *Communist Manifesto* itself declared (in the Preface of 1872) : "The practical application of the principles will depend, as the *Manifesto* itself states, everywhere and at all times, on the historical conditions for the time being existing."

In their long life, Marx and Engels themselves never hesitated to expand and extend their views. Examples are provided by their attempt to build up the broadest non-sectarian unity of the working class in the First International ; their advocacy of revolutionary seizure of power at the critical moment of the Paris Commune ; their recognition of the possibility of peaceful socialist transformation in Holland or England (1872) ; their insistence on a long period of socialist construction in the *Critique of the Gotha Program* ; their plea for the building of democratic mass parties of the workers in different lands in the days of the Second International, and so on. Their worthy pupil Lenin abandoned the 'orthodoxy' of his time and expanded or developed Marxism in his doctrine of revolutionary Party discipline ; in the determination of the duty and responsibilities of the proletariat in the bourgeois-democratic revolution in a backward country ; in his sketch of a revolutionary program fitting the ripe imperialist stage of capitalism ; in his inspiration in adopting the soviets as the tools of revolution ; in the decision to build Socialism in One Country without waiting for world-revolution, etc. In constructing socialism, Stalin did not stick to orthodoxy but devised practical paths of positive action. The United Front of Dimitrov is another shining instance of 'expanded' Marxism. Even Mao preached the relatively new concept of People's

Democracy to suit the altered circumstances. And, the effort to estimate the character of the new period and present an appropriate new program at the Twentieth Congress is nothing but a still further move towards Marxian development. To reject any or all of such innovations, under the spur of dogmatic reiteration, is a proof of fanaticism and therefore contrary to Marxist tradition.

But then, is not 'expansion' a 'revision' at bottom? Here the problem is to decide what is a Marxist fundamental, or what exactly is the Marxian outlook. A fundamental is an insight which is above the specific periods of the movement, which need not be altered with the changing objective circumstances. To desert such fundamentals is true revisionism, and the term should not apply to any and every suggested new course. It may even happen that what is condemned as revisionism in one set of circumstances may not be worth condemnation in another. A few points may clarify the concept of 'revision' of Marxism.

First of all, we have the Philosophy of Marxism. Materialism is indeed a doctrine which need not change from period to period. It teaches that the external material world is the basic reality; that the existence of matter does not depend on consciousness; that thought without a corresponding body is a meaningless concept. To veer to the opposite view, philosophic idealism, is a mark of true revision, and Lenin attacked it in his *Empirio-Criticism*. The essence of Dialectics—the endless stream of evolutionary change, contradictions within any object or thought, the uneven motion of change, etc.—is likewise unaltered in successive ages. To deny dialectics and lean on mechanistic materialism is a revision of Marx.

Second, there is the Materialist Conception of History, which Marx held to be true for every age. Social life depends on a specific mode of production which is the compound of productive forces and production-relations; with the evolution of productive forces follow the correspondingly changed production-relations; on the changed mode of production as

the basis, the superstructure has to be adjusted to it – such is the Marxist outlook on History. The alteration in this approach amounts again to a revision of Marx. Other similar revisions in this sphere would be to deny that class differences in the history of civilization have been objectively true ; that at the basis of history, from the origin of civilization to the arrival of the full communist class-less society, lie class-differences ; that in class-society there is always class-conflict, open or concealed, sharply direct or relatively mild ; that there can be no real interpretation of history if we ignore the inherent class-interests prevailing at different stages.

Thirdly, we have the Marxian Economic Analysis. In a class-society with antagonistic relations, the product produced by the direct producers yields a surplus which is appropriated by the owning classes. This is known technically as the process of 'exploitation'. In a capitalist society, the surplus takes the form of 'surplus value'. To ignore this is tantamount to revisionism. Capitalism cannot eliminate its specific contradictions and thereby become stable and permanent. Through capitalist contradictions, socialism will surely replace capitalism and eliminate private ownership of the principal means of production. To abandon this economic approach would be revisionism, and such rejection would turn socialism into a sentimental utopia and not the natural and inexorable succession to the capitalist system. The celebrated 'revisionism' of Bernstein falls in this category.

Fourthly, there is the Marxist conception of the State. The State appears in history along with the classes with their private appropriation of the surplus product in one form or the other. Whatever might be the outer form of the State, its real character is the employment of adequate force by the rulers to keep in subjection the classes ruled. Revisionism tends to forget this truth, as happened with the Gotha Program. In a capitalist society, the labour movement is necessary for the self-protection of the workers. The essence of Marxism in the Erfurt Program of Kautsky is correctly put

as the conjunction of the daily struggle of the workers with the ideal of the future socialist society. To forget this is revisionism.

In the fifth place, the concept of Proletarian Struggle - both economic and political. To neglect one to concentrate on the other is clearly revisionist, for example the Lassalleian 'politicism' and the Russian 'economism' castigated by Lenin. The proletarian struggle also requires the proletariat's own party to disregard the need for which is yet another revisionist error. This error may be committed in the name of a pure 'leftist' worker's revolution, as we find in the left revisionism of the Anarcho-Syndicalists.

In the sixth place, the concept of the Capture of Power in the form of a socialist revolution by the proletariat and its fellow-fighters. The exact way in which this will be accomplished will depend of course on the objective concrete circumstances of each revolution. To deny this will lead to the reiteration of conclusions appropriate only to some stage or other. Thus, the belief that armed insurrection is necessary, not in very many cases but universally is an instance of the left revision of Marxism. The proletarian leadership continuing after the capture of power is certainly one of Marx's teachings. The right deviation of Kautsky did deny this, but here also there may occur a leftist revision which demands the indiscriminate adherence to the familiar pattern of previous experience. Workers' leadership is often called the dictatorship of the proletariat which Marx called his special contribution. Yet, did not Lenin's dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry (1903) and Mao's New Democracy (1940) depart from the rigid concept of proletarian dictatorship, and quite rightly in view of the flexible approach of Marx ? But after all, the essence of the proletarian dictatorship lies in the leadership of the workers, and in nothing else, and this is fundamental undoubtedly.

Seventhly, International Workers' Unity is another Marxist fundamental. Here, revision may come in two opposite direc-

tion. During the First World War, the reformist Social Democrats came forward in support of their respective combatant governments, thereby damaging the cause of revolution. And today, we find the ultra-revolutionary Chinese leadership poised in their own interests to break the international unity of the working class, under the slogan of proletarian internationalism itself. To raise the banner of proletarian unity for some specific regional interest, to use the slogan as a cover for national pride or even for unknown purpose is surely a revision of Marxism, however loud might be the cry for revolution. The preservation of international proletarian unity is indeed a fundamental, but obviously it can not be maintained by irresponsible action.

Finally, it is fundamental to Marx's teaching to hold that post-revolutionary Socialist Construction is a long-term affair, covering a whole epoch. It is unrealistic ultra-leftist revisionism to forget it and dream of building socialism in a trice. Marx conceived of two distinct phases in socialist construction which he named pure 'socialism' and full 'communism' respectively. The method of distribution differs in the two phases : in the lower phase, class-differences still persist, albeit in non-antagonistic form, and though the differences begin to whittle down under the pressure of the common interests of the toiling population ; in the second higher phase only comes a full-fledged classless society. Now a revision of this fundamental concept will mean either a rightist abandonment of hopes of a communist society or the leftist impatience for communism now. With this is linked up the doctrine of the 'withering away' of the coercive State-machine. A leftist deviation here will be the demand for the immediate abolition of the State, in the true Anarchist style. The corresponding right deviation will be the sneaking belief in the permanence of the State, a distrust of the very concept that the State based on forcible suppression would one day turn into a mere administrative mechanism.

The purpose of the detailed discussion above of some possible variants of true Revisionism was to point to the fact that new thinking is not necessarily revisionist. It is very easy to brand legitimate Expansion also as revisionist, under the spell of Dogmatism. To cool judgements, fanatic reiteration is certainly not less dangerous, though to neglect such dangers has repeatedly passed as the mark of a revolutionary. But is not such attitude a deviation from Marxism ?

Very many signs do appear in fanatical reiteration of the old. The tactical program of a particular period is prolonged after the concrete conditions have changed, and the triumphant policy of one stage is presented as an eternal verity. It is a mark of fanaticism to refuse to see or admit the change in circumstances, to remain satisfied with a partial evaluation in place of a total review of the entire new situation, to abstain from the mental effort to review old lines of action. In support of such a conservative stand, there may flow forth a stream of 'authoritative' quotations, as we saw recently in the *Long Live Leninism*. Of the five main characteristics indicated by Lenin in his classic analysis of Imperialism, at least two do not exist any longer : international capitalist monopolies dominate no more the world divided amongst themselves ; and the world is not partitioned anymore among the capitalist Great Powers. When half the world has turned almost socialist, and when extensive colonial regions has slipped out of the imperialist orbit, should the idea of new epoch be dubbed a revision of Marxism, or is the refusal to think in terms of a new stage of mere resort to fanatic reiteration contrary to Marx's thought itself ?

Marx, Engels, and Lenin were quite used to go beyond the beaten track and study the situation afresh. Such is the Marxian tradition. Under them, communist thought was constantly expanded, and became richer and truer. Even Stalin in his earlier days was able to rise above 'orthodox' thinking. In the face of the Fascist peril, a new turn by Dimitrov¹ did

bring to the international communist movement a fresh impetus. And, Mao showed the courage to open new paths which meant the success of the Chinese Revolution. Yet we see Stalin falling into the bog of sectarianism in his later days. And the Chinese leadership in raising aloft the banner of left-wing revolutionism is treading the path of reiteration against the necessary development of Marxism. Such narrowness does hurt the scientific approach. Today, sectarian narrowness divorces Marxism from its intimate ally, humanism ; foils any effective analysis of recent capitalism ; brings an indolence in the objective assessment of the situations in different countries ; substitutes imaginary popular decisions for a correct evaluation of public opinion ; and suppresses discussion within the Party for the sake of the *obiterdicta*, while the leaders are engulfed in the quest after the retention of the charmed status of a leader. The time has come to stimulate in Marxian circles the understanding that dogmatism is to be shunned as much as revisionism. This is the traditional road to a renaissance of Marxism, its true and necessary expansion to fit changing concrete situations.

THE HISTORICAL APPROACH IN MARX

On the occasion of the centenary of the first volume of *Das Kapital*, people all over the world will recall its epoch-making analysis of capitalism. But Marx was no mere economist; he was also the great political theorist of the working-class movement, a philosopher of distinction, an acute historian. Marxism of course is an integral thought, in which economics and politics, philosophy and history fuse into a complete whole. Yet for the sake of a clearer understanding, it is permissible to separate one aspect of it as an 'isolate' (to use the term once proposed by Professor Levy), provided we do not forget to restore it at the proper time to the logical entity to which it belongs.

History-writing flows in three main channels, on three levels as it were, though it is better not to arrange them in a hierarchic gradation. In the first place, there are the articles, reviews, monographs, theses which examine some specific issue, some 'moment' in the stream of history. Secondly, we have the broader surveys of regions, countries, movements, epochs which afford a more sweeping view. Thirdly, men attempt still wider visions of historical development as such, fringing upon some kind of philosophy of history. In each of these three forms Marx's contribution is unforgettable.

Professional historians reject such evaluation on the ground of Marx's alleged lack of objectivity. History, we are told, is a record of things 'as they happen', a presentation of 'objective truth' which leaves no room for a 'point of view'. Surely there is here a wrong understanding. In any social study, a point of view is sure to emerge, or at least lurk behind the scenes. The unavoidable primary task of selection and

grouping of facts will ensure this. After all, some kind of point of view is part of every writer's mental make-up and arises inevitably from his environment, experience and reflection. Those who prattle against a point of view in history remain blissfully unconscious of their own points of view.

The wiser historian will not disown his point of view but will constantly assess and examine it in the light of the available evidence which must not be wilfully suppressed. Nothing more can be rightfully demanded of him. As for the presentation of objective truth, admittedly man's knowledge has no finality. Every mental construction must be only a search after, an approximation to the truth. But our knowledge and theories are nonetheless objective truth, in spite of their relativity. This is quite possible if we follow the rules of evidence and reasoning. And as in science, so in history, imagination springing out of solid information can never be ruled out in framing a hypothesis leading to further investigation.

The fashionable *a priori* arguments against Marx's claim as a historian are indeed illogical and puerile. They are facile ways of evading his challenge.

II

Specific studies in history—of the first type indicated above—by Marx and Engels are mostly grouped in the two volumes of *Historical Writings*, published by the Moscow Institute (first Indian edition in 1944). In addition we have the articles and notes on India, as well as numerous scattered references elsewhere to other historical topics, and finally the stimulating points raised in the *Correspondence*. The range of interest and information thus revealed is truly impressive. One comes across penetrating memorable discussions on the histories of France and Germany, East Europe and Spain, America and India, references to the developments in Ireland, Britain, Russia, China, etc.

Most of these studies bear upon contemporary history,

though the background information is never absent and often striking enough. It is often argued that contemporary history is not history at all, for inevitably there would be a 'bias'. This bias is only another name for the unavoidable point of view already discussed. And is 'bias' absent from earlier history? Any account of crucial periods like the Renaissance, the Reformation, the French Revolution, the Indian 'Mutiny' is likely to be even more biased in this sense than sketches of contemporary events.

It will not be too much to claim that no competent teacher, no serious student of 19th century history can afford to miss the light thrown by Marx and Engels. Much of the material they gathered and used has been passed over, unconsciously or wilfully, in the books offered to us today. Conscientious historians cannot ignore such evidence in the interest of history itself.

The most brilliant of the specific historical writings of Marx are the three booklets on French history. The *Class Struggle in France 1848 to 1850* (1850), *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1851-52), and *The Civil War in France* (1871). They are a mine of historical information, with keen observation and deep insight, and illustrate the issues in France in the second and third quarters of the 19th century to an extent which few books have attained. To an unprejudiced reader, they are also gems of historical writing, even if every formulation is not readily acceptable.

Engels does not fall far short of this achievement in the two booklets on German history: *The Peasant War in Germany* (1850) and *Germany—Revolution and Counter-Revolution* (1851-52). The first, as Engels honestly admits, is based on the factual material presented by the historian Zimmermann in 1841, but goes beyond it in raising fundamental issues like the origins, theories, and consequences of the great revolt of 1525, in the light of Marx's materialist conception. The latter, in which Marx collaborated, is a collection of 20 letters in the *New York Daily Tribune*, which offer a

detailed account of dramatic events with exceptional insight and observation, indispensable for any student of 1848.

Marx's *Revolution in Spain* (1854-58) is not very well-known and yet of outstanding historical value. It is a collection of 25 contributions, with some of which Engels was associated, published in the *New York Daily Tribune*, *Putnam's Magazine*, and the *New American Cyclopaedia*. Primarily concerned with the abortive revolt of 1854, this work contains background discussions of exceptional historical merit. We find here, for example, a detailed examination of the development in the Peninsula since the 16th century; an analysis of the popular revolts in the first half of the 19th; and a review of the 'dual character' of the movement of 1808-14. Marx raised incidentally the problem why, in the very country where absolute monarchy was among the first to arise, 'centralisation has never succeeded,' so that Napoleon found that 'the centre of Spanish resistance was nowhere and everywhere.'

The Civil War in the United States, a collection of writings by both Marx and Engels, is perhaps equally unfamiliar. It consists of Marx's 7 articles in the *New York Daily Tribune*; 35 contributions by the two friends in Vienna's *Die Presse* (both in 1861-62); and extracts from 61 letters by them between 1861 and 1866. Here there is ample historical material—for instance on the British cotton trade and the economic situation; English public opinion and the reaction among the workers; the intricacies of the Trent Case; the course of military events; parliamentary debates; and the Abolitionist movement.

Marx's discussions on Indian history, by contrast, have attracted considerable attention. In the present context it will be enough to note that Marx had posed here five specific questions—the nature of the ancient Indian economy; the sequence of political events in Muslim India; the functioning of the British East India Company; the character of the Revolt of 1857; and the future results of the British Rule in India. Inci-

dentally, Marx's passion for medieval Indian chronology was only possible in a historian.

Apart from the more solid endeavours indicated above, miscellaneous historical points and comments are scattered lavishly throughout Marx's writings. Often enough they are suggestive, thought-provoking, occasionally brilliant. Anyway, they are quite sufficient to establish the historical approach in Marx, the contention that Marx had a perennial interest in history.

III

In the second type of historical effort—the broad survey ...the main contribution of Marx is enshrined in the four volumes of *Capital*.

The first volume, perfected and published by Marx himself in 1867, is beyond question one of the most stimulating books ever written. It is 'a critical analysis of capitalist production' and depicts this mode of production in historical motion.

In the original preface, Marx defined his aim to be 'to lay bare the economic law of motion of modern society'. He added—'the evolution of the economic formation of society is viewed as a process of natural history—the present society is no solid crystal, but an organism capable of change, and is constantly changing'. In the preface of 1873, we have his further explanation—rational dialectics 'regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less than its momentary existence'. Motion, evolution, process, fluid movement are of course the very essence of history.

Engels in the preface to the English edition (1886) underlines the historical approach of *Capital*. He characterises Marx's theory as one 'which views modern capitalist production as a mere passing stage in the economic history of mankind' and 'the result of a lifelong study of the economic history and condition of England'.

The historical approach in the *Capital* did not escape the

attention of some contemporaries. A Russian reviewer in 1872 summed up Marx's outlook as essentially historical: 'Abstract laws do not exist. On the contrary...every historical period has laws of its own...economic life offers us a phenomenon analogous to the history of evolution in other branches of biology....With the varying degree of productive power, social condition and the laws governing them vary.'

Marx's objective in the *Capital* outlined above did not remain a mere pious ideal. To substantiate his argument, he drew illustrative material from history, alike of economic thought and economic events. We read in the *Athenaeum* review of 1887: 'Marx has drawn not only upon the works of contemporary economists and a great variety of parliamentary and other reports, but upon the writings also of the earliest English economists of the 16th and 17th centuries, with which he shows a familiarity quite unusual.' A study of the index to *Capital I* shows that Marx drew materials from no less than 248 authors (ancient, medieval, modern and near-contemporary); from 46 anonymous works (some of these occur in the first list also); from the different issues of 21 newspapers and periodicals; and from as many as 84 official reports. Any historian could be proud of such a range of scholarship.

History involves a command over concrete factual material. In *Capital I*, Marx marshalled his knowledge of facts in a truly overwhelming fashion. We find section after section crammed full with detailed historical information—for example in the Dona Torr edition (1938), between pages 227 and 288—conditions without legal limits to exploitation; legislation to extend working hours from the mid-14th to the end of the 17th century; the limitation of the working day by factory acts; the reaction in other lands. Between pages 391 and 512 again occur the historical facts about—the employment of women and children; prolongation of the working day; the intensification of labour; strife between the worker and the machine; the crisis in the cotton trade; the

effects on domestic industry ; the factory acts with their sanitation and education clauses. The mere recital of some of the themes demonstrates Marx's grasp over history.

In *Capital I* we also come across isolated passages in passing on noncapitalist modes of production – patriarchal primitive, ancient oriental, European classical, medieval servile, etc. But Marx's main discussion of such historic formations must be sought elsewhere.

Much of *Capital I* is devoted of course to an abstract analysis of capitalism, but the result is nonetheless a revelation of the motion inherent in the system, that is a process of historical unfolding. The labour process is common to all actual and possible social formations, being the indispensable union between nature and labouring man ; without it man cannot exist. Whenever a part of society owns the means of production the surplus product is privately appropriated by the owning classes and there is 'exploitation', a historical phenomenon. When commodity production arises, there is the creation of value. Surplus value comes under capitalist production, with 'capital' on the one hand, 'free labour' on the other. The capitalist quest after surplus value is a 'straining after an unlimited extension'. This involves internal contradiction which ultimately results in the passing away of the capitalist mode of production. Like previous economic systems, capitalism is a mere stage in history.

The origin of capitalism is then a historic process – the 'primitive accumulation of capital' on the one hand, and the massing of free labour ready to sell labour power on the other (free in a legal sense ; 'free' from the means of production in the socio-economic sense as well). This conjunction does not happen always. Capitalism then is not something eternal ; it is only a specific historical mode of production.

The accumulation of capital is not the consequence of the existence of two kinds of people in nature, the diligent elite and the lazy rascal – not the result of some 'original sin'. 'In actual history, it is notorious that conquest, enslavement,

robbery, murder, briefly, force, play the great part... the methods of primitive accumulation are anything but idyllic.' Chapter after chapter in *Capital I* offer the historical evidence for this formulation.

Historically once more, the dissolution of the preceding feudal structure is bound up with the growth of the capitalist mode of production. The 'expropriation of the peasantry' was the basis of the whole process. This is again a chapter in real history. It involved in the first capitalist country, England, the spoliation of the church property, the disbanding of feudal retainers, enclosures, decline of the yeomanry, pauperism, the clearing of estates, and such like historical developments. 'Expropriation' of the mass of the people forms the prelude to the history of capital.'

Not merely the historical origins of capitalism, but also the process of its further development received in Marx the same historical treatment. Basing himself on the concrete experience of England, he laid bare two stages of growth. In chapter 14 of *Capital I*, there is the account of the rise of manufactures (mid-16th to end of the 18th century) - with the union of various handicrafts and the splitting up into detail operations, together with the advent of political economy itself. Chapter 15 deals with machinery and modern industry, with an analysis of a machine into three component parts - the motor mechanism, the transmission mechanism, and the working tool. The two chapters cover nearly 200 pages (pp. 327-515) in the first volume of *Capital*.

Marx traced the historic process at work in contemporary capitalism. 'Expropriation of the mass of the people' from the means of production is accompanied by the growth at the other pole of 'mass of misery, oppression', '(wage) slavery, degradation, exploitation'. 'With this too grows the revolt of the working class...disciplined, united, organised by the mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself. The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production, ...Centralisation of the means of production and socialisation

of labour at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder.' (p. 789). Even if one does not embrace the whole analysis, its essential emphasis on a movement in time, the process of history, remains beyond challenge.

IV

The Later volumes of *Capital* did not have the benefit of Marx's masterly finished touch. But nonetheless they were compiled faithfully from the voluminous manuscripts and authentic notes left by Marx himself.

The second volume was published by Engels in 1885, his preface being dated on Marx's birthday. *Capital II* is most severely analytical and abstract, dealing with the metamorphoses, the turn-over and the reproduction and circulation of capital. Its most memorable theoretical formulation is the distinction between Departments I and II.

Yet the historical material contained therein is by no means inconsiderable. Apart from the scattered references, at least 100 pages (Untermann's translation) are covered by historical discussions (chapters 10, 11, 19, sections ix and xiii of chapter 20). The historical approach persists therefore in *Capital II* in spite of its predominantly theoretical form.

Capital III was brought out by Engels in 1894. It deals with the capitalist production 'as a whole', and necessarily therefore in accordance with Marx's outlook a mass of historical material had to be harnessed.

In the opening chapters, over 30 pages (Untermann's translation) are filled with factual reports on coal mines, work in closed rooms, economies in power, fluctuations in price and the cotton crisis of 1861-63. Again in chapters 24 to 35, historical facts and discussions cover about half of the approximately 250 pages. Here we find a survey of credit and currency literature, bank records, English bank laws, exchange statistics. These are enough to dispel any misconception that Marx was occupied only with abstract theorising. In the

style of a true historian Marx could comment in passing : 'The monetary system is essentially Catholic, the credit system essentially Protestant ... It is Faith that makes blessed.'

Capital III is of great value to historians for its discussions on merchants' capital, usurers' capital and rent.

Chapter 20 is concerned entirely with the historical data on merchants' capital which of course is 'older than the capitalist mode of production'. The merchant in old societies 'tries to trap' the wealth and luxury of the principal owners of the surplus product—the slave-holder, the feudal landlord, perhaps the state ('for instance, the oriental despot'). 'Where merchants' capital still predominates, we find backward conditions', 'a system of robbery'. The role of merchants' robbery comes out in ancient Carthage and Rome, and among the later Venetians, Portuguese, Dutch, etc. 'But the development of merchants' capital by itself is incapable of bringing about and explaining the transition from one mode of production to another.' 'What new mode of production will take the place of the old does not depend on commerce, but on the character of the old mode of production itself.' Gentle fun is poked at the historian Mommsen who found capitalism and the rule of capital in ancient Rome. In the antique world, merchants' capital saw the rise of slave economy ; in the modern world, it has been followed by the capitalist mode. Even in ancient society, merchants' capital did not mark the development of crafts in Rome ; in Corinth and the Greek cities, it did. In the modern epoch, the capitalist mode could arise in mercantile Holland, but not in mercantile Portugal. The history of the decline of Holland, in contrast to England, is the history of the lack of any subordination of merchants' capital to industrial capital. The obstacles presented by the precapitalist modes of production to the 'corrosive influence of commerce' is shown in the intercourse of the English with India or China. Where the merchants take possession of production (the English clothiers), there is 'an obstacle to a real capitalist mode of production' ; when the producer becomes a

merchant and capitalist, there is 'a revolutionary transition from feudalism'. With large-scale industry, 'commerce becomes the servant of industrial production.'

Chapter 36 on 'Precapitalist Conditions' historically reviews the role of usurers' capital. 'It does not alter the mode of production, but attaches itself to it as a parasite and makes it miserable. It sucks its blood.' It 'paralyses the productive forces instead of developing them.' 'Under the Asiatic forms usury may last for a long time, without producing anything else but economic disintegration and political rottenness.' Roman usury ruined the plebeians and the small peasants; slave economy was only more firmly established thereby, instead of any transition to a new society. The medieval church, it is noted in passing, forbade the taking of interest; 'but the sale of property for the purpose of getting out of a tight place had not been forbidden'; 'it had not even been forbidden to transfer property for a certain period to the moneylender as a security.' Thus the church profited, as during the Crusades. Holland's economic progress in the 17th century marked the overthrow of 'the monopoly of the old-style usury, based on poverty.' The Bank of England followed the Dutch example and cut down the interest rates, and the usurers, 'goldsmiths and pawn-brokers raised a howl of rage', as Macaulay noted.

Chapter 47 on rent has also an essentially historical approach. The most primitive form is labour-rent, 'the brutal form of forced labour for another'. In rent-in-kind, 'the direct producer is rather driven by the force of circumstances than by direct coercion...to perform surplus-labour in his own responsibility...this form is quite suitable for becoming the basis of stationary conditions of society, such as we see in Asia.... This is particularly the case, when this form is met and exploited by a conquering industrial nation, as India is by the English.' Under money-rent, 'the direct producer no longer turns over the product, but its price to the landlord (who may be either the state or a private individual)... a certain portion of this must now be converted into commodities.... The charac-

ter of the entire mode of production is thus more or less changed.' Under capitalism, with propertyless day-labourers and capitalist tenant-farmers, capitalist ground-rent emerges. This is the share of the owner of land in the surplus over capitalist profit in the surplus-value extorted from the direct producer. Ground-rent takes the two forms of differential and absolute rent.

Towards the end, *Capital III* presents vivid total picture of the Marxian economic analysis in its historical setting. 'The specific economic form, in which unpaid surplus labour is pumped out of the direct producer, determines the relation of rulers and ruled.... Upon this is founded the entire formation of the economic community which grows out of the conditions of production itself, and this also determines its specific political shape. It is always the direct relation of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden foundation of the entire social construction.... This does not prevent the same economic basis from showing infinite variations.... This is due to innumerable outside circumstances.' (p. 919).

Men cling tenaciously to their own mode of production, to capitalism for example, as 'independent of all historical development'. This is the great unhistorical illusion. But 'capital is not a thing. It is a definite interrelation in social production belonging to a definite historical formation of society', while land and labour 'are common to all modes of production'. 'The scientific analysis of the capitalist mode of production demonstrates that it is a peculiar mode of production, specifically defined by historical development; that it, like any other definite mode of production, is conditioned upon a certain stage of social productivity and upon the historically developed form of the forces of production. This historical prerequisite is itself a historical result and product of a preceding process, from which the new mode of production takes its departure as from its given foundation. The conditions of production corresponding to this specific,

historically determined mode of production have a specific, historical, passing character.' (p. 1023).

Again: 'the labour process is a simple process between man and nature, its simple elements remain the same in all social forms of development.... Whenever a certain maturity is reached, one definite social form is discarded and displaced by a higher one. The time for the coming of such a crisis is announced by the depth and breadth of the contradictions and antagonisms, which separate the conditions of distribution, and with them the definite historical form of the corresponding conditions of production, from the productive forces, the productivity, and development of their agencies. A conflict then arises between the material development of production and its social form.' (p. 1030).

Capital IV is better known as the *Theories of Surplus value*. Marx Called this projected volume the 'historical, historico-critical, or historico-literary part' of his work. It was in effect a thorough examination of the history of political economy. Engels did not live to publish it; it was brought out first by Kautsky in 1905-10 in a very defective form. The authoritative edition came from Moscow as late as 1954.

The book begins with an account of Steuart's 'hopeless attempt to give a rational form to the monetary and mercantilist system' (chapter 1). Two chapters (2, 6) are devoted to the physiocrats, who transferred the origin of surplus value from circulation to production. Two more (3, 4) deal with Adam Smith, who went forward and in part also backward in relation to the physiocrats. Chapters 5 and 7 are concerned respectively with Necker and Linguet. 13 addenda follow in which a host of other economists are discussed. This is as far as part I goes.

Part I drew from as many as 54 economic writers with their different writings. The sources of the various quotations lie in the English, French, German and Italian languages—a testimony to the historical scholarship of Marx.

One chapter in part II is on Rodbertus (No. 8). Another

digression is chapter 9 on different views about differential rent. Then follow the nine chapters with an exhaustive discussion of Ricardo.

In part III, we have the exposure of Malthus in Chapter 19. The next chapter describes the retreat of the post-Ricardians from the master himself. Chapter 21 is on the 'proletarian opposition based on Ricardo'. The last three chapters deal with some of the other economists.

The mere catalogue of contents of *Capital IV* is a demonstration that no survey of political economy up-to-that-date on this scale has ever been attempted.

V

There remains to be considered the third great stream of history-writing – the generalised view of historical development in its entirety, approaching a distinctive philosophy of history. Marx's main contributions here lie in his *German Ideology* (along with Engels), the *Precapitalist Economic Formations* (usually called the *Formen*), and the famous preface to the *Critique of Political Economy*. The recent discussion of Professor Hobsbawm on this is of great value and I have freely drawn upon it.

What are the different social formations which can be detected and identified in the historic record? Can the most fundamental principles of social transformation be formulated?

Popular Marxism gives a categorical answer to the first question. The usual current formula is a passage from primitive communism to slavery, feudalism and capitalism (in that order), heading towards socialism today. This is a simple story of unilinear progress for mankind, easy to understand and remember, and certainly not totally wrong.

But Marx had a profound scientific mind, not prone to simplification. He was also a pioneer pathfinder, with a historical temper generalising only from concrete study of reality. His dialectics involved not merely the rejection of Hegelian mystification, he had also no patience with easy ways out like

'wooden trichotomies'. In his search after generalisation he was historical.

There is therefore in Marx no final answer to our first problem. And he went on searching for the different social formations. While he was firmly convinced that there are different forms passing in the span of history, the basic concept of historic transformation, the essence of his historical materialism.

The *German Ideology* of 1845-46 seems to identify four stages of historic development, corresponding to various forms of property. The first is communal property, tribal ownership. This is an 'extension of the family', with even then some 'slavery latent in the family' as it were. Then comes the 'communal and state property of antiquity', when tribes form into cities 'accompanied by slavery'; we have 'private property developing' alongside, till slavery may become 'the basis of the whole productive system'; the intermediate plebeians then turn into 'a proletarian rabble'. The third stage is 'feudal or rank ownership', feudal or estate property. Here we find the 'enslaved small peasantry' and 'the feudal organisation of trades'; small-scale cultivation and the 'craft type of industry'; the starting out from the country, rather from the antique cities; the 'division into estates'; the formation of kingdoms by 'a necessity'. Fourthly, we detect the transition into the bourgeois society - the gradual rise of the burgher class; manufactures outgrowing the gild system; the struggle for trade and the world market; the creation through trade and manufacture of the big bourgeoisie.

The *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 is a rough simplification of the above picture. It emphasises explicitly however the 'constant opposition 'between' oppressor and oppressed', appropriate and understandable enough in a fighting document which opens and ends with a challenge to existing society. 'The history of all existing society' (Engels later amended this to 'all written history') 'is the history of class struggles.' Three types of class society alone are recognised here: the slave

society of antiquity, the feudalism of the middle ages, the modern bourgeois society. This becomes the common parlance of Marxism, a clear simple picture.

Unfortunately perhaps, Marx in his *Formen* presents us with a later, more sophisticated, more complex, more tentative, more considered sketch of social development. In his search after historic truth, he was evidently not afraid of any charge of 'revisionism'. The main innovation now is the Asiatic or oriental system which did not figure ten years before.

In the *Formen* (1857-58), we begin with 'the tribal community' of 'communal proprietors'—with the emendation that 'this form can realise itself in a variety of ways.' There appear now alternative routes, not a unilinear path, out of the original primitive communal system : the Asiatic oriental, the classical ancient, the rather inchoate Germanic, the shadowy Slavonic. There is here also a crucial distinction between systems which resist and those which favour historic evolution, absent before. Clearly the Asiatic and perhaps the Slavonic belong the first category.

The Asiatic society is not characterised chiefly by the absence of property in land and by centralised public works and irrigation, as the articles on India (1853) seem to suggest. The emphasis in the *Formen* falls rather on 'the self-sustaining unity of manufacture and agriculture' within the oriental village community, which of course would resist economic change. Instead of invariable oriental despotism, it is admitted that authority may be 'more despotic or more democratic' in form. The village communities may come under an 'all-embracing unity' from above, which would then appear as 'the higher or sole proprietor, the real communities only as hereditary possessors ;... Oriental despotism therefore appears to lead to a legal absence of property.' 'Irrigation system... means of communication, etc... appear as the work of the higher unity' ; cities are mere 'locations for external trade', or 'princely camps'.

In the antique European society, which 'like the first gives

rise to substantial variations', there is 'a more dynamic historical life'. 'The basis here is not the land, but city'; there is common land, but 'conditions arise which allow the individual to become a private proprietor - of a particular plot.'

We now encounter in post-primitive society a third type - the Germanic (not limited of course to the Germans alone). The community appears here as 'an association, not as a union'; common land is in the form of hunting grounds, pastures, wood and - 'a mere supplement to individual property'; 'the foundation is the isolated, independent family settlement' linked by the 'occasional assembly'.

The Slavonic form obviously is akin to the Asiatic, but it is not elaborated in the *Formen*.

It would appear that Marx thought the oriental and the Slavonic forms to be the nearest to the original primitive community. The ancient classical and the Germanic types are not however derived from the Asiatic oriental society, but represent a more articulated, more dynamic type. This is a clear rejection of the unilinear ladder-like common conception of social progress. Incidentally, this keeps open the road for further investigation and research. The list in the *Formen* remains thus tentative.

Slavery and serfdom appear in the *Formen* as 'secondary, never primary', being only further developments of property. They modify the forms above but are least able to do so in the Asiatic mode. Contrary to the popular Marxist presentation, antique classical society now seems to start with citizen small owners, and not slavery; it generally ends in slavery. This picture is much nearer of course to what concrete history has revealed of ancient Europe.

The Germanic form is hardly a complete socio-economic formation, for it is also presented as the substratum of feudal society, in conjunction with the medieval town.

Feudal society and the dissolution of feudal relations to the emergence of capitalism in the *Formen* is broadly the same process as worked out later in the *Capital*.

The *Formen* is not one of those earlier writings of Marx about which much fuss has been made recently. Though unpublished by him, it is the product of Marx in his maturity, and was intended by him to be a basis of the *Critique* and *Capital*. It is the foundation of the celebrated formulation in the preface in the *Critique* (1859), a full decade after the *Manifesto*: 'in broad outlines Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production can be designated as progressive epochs in the economic formation of society.' 'Progress' here obviously refers to Marx's conception of the general social development in its totality, not the simple unilinear 'leap' from stage to stage. What remains solid is the broad transition from primitive society to class societies of different types leading irresistibly towards the classless society of the future. The understanding in the *Formen* is also duly reflected in the still later masterpiece *Capital*, in its many scattered references to precapitalist formations.

But Marx and Engels never stopped in their historical enquiries. They were drawn to a further study of primitive communism, under the influence of the historian Maurer, the anthropologist Morgan, the sociologist Kovalevsky. Engels's *Origin* clearly reflects this deeper interest. Feudalism also attracted their further attention: Engels formulated the concept of two periods of European serfdom, for example, with an intervening freer interval; he pointed out to Marx in a letter in 1882 that 'formerly you expressed a divergent opinion of this.' Evidently, the two pioneers of thought never wearied in their quest after historical truth. Yet the fact remains that Marx never formally repudiated the Asiatic mode, though sometimes it was relegated to the 'archaic types' of society; Engels dropped it in his *Origin*, apparently with the same idea that it belonged to the 'prehistory' of civilisation.

However, the need for simplification in the interest of the general movement persisted, and there was the natural demand for certainty. Engels in his *Origin* (1884) divided prehistoric culture into the epochs of savagery and barbarism, with three

stages in each ; in the epoch of civilisation he designated 'three great forms of servitude', the three forms of exploitation - slavery, serfdom, wage labour. Stalin in *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* (1938) concluded : 'Five main types of relations of production are known to history : primitive communal, slave, feudal, capitalist and socialist.' Mao Tse-tung, writing on *Chinese Society* (1940), describes an apparently unilinear line of development in China - classless primitive communes, slave society, feudalism.

There is justification for popularisation for the cause. But no indication is usually given that Marx's own thought was more complex, and more historical than this. And thereby, by such silence, the popular craze for pocket-book wisdom may easily be stimulated. It will be a misfortune if Marx's genuine intellectual quest is allowed to be forgotten. Marxism surely cannot ignore Marx himself.

Whatever might be the uncertainties in the identification of the specific social formations in actual history, Marx never wavered about the more fundamental thing, the basic concepts of his philosophy of history, historical Materialism. This is clear enough in various parts of *Capital* (notably the passages at the end of *Capital III*, partly quoted above), or even earlier writings like *The Eighteenth Brumaire*. The best short formulation occurs in the preface to the *Critique of Political Economy*. The often-quoted passage will perhaps bear recapitulation as an appropriate end to this long discussion :

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political super-structure.... The mode of production... conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but,

on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations.... From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed... No social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed ; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself.

Applications of the theory, identifications of different social formations, definition of their characteristics may not be certain or final, leaving open the door to further historical investigations. The theory itself, the outlook, the approach remain firm enough. And history has never been, nor ever will be the same since Marx's penetrating vision swept over its entire domain.

MARX ON INDIAN HISTORY

Marx's views on India have been often enough commented on in passing, discussed and criticised. Yet we seldom come across a concise yet comprehensive survey of all his recorded utterances on Indian history at the solid basis of an evaluation of his attitude. Such an exposition may very well be a part of the commemoration which we owe to the founder of Marxism on the occasion of his 150th birth anniversary. The present essay is merely an effort in this direction.

Marx did not leave behind any systematic presentation of the history of India, that was never his main preoccupation. He set down his observations on certain current Indian questions which attracted public attention, or drew materials from India's past and present conditions to illustrate parts of his more general arguments. These passing reflections cannot therefore be taken as a finished study of the subject in any dogmatic sense. But in an outstanding genius, even stray remarks deserve careful consideration for their brilliant insight and maturity of understanding. It is the task of serious researchers, especially of devoted sincere Marxist scholars, to probe deeper into the matter with the fuller knowledge now possible, establish or elaborate Marx's tentative conclusions, modify them if necessary.

Marx's opinions for their intrinsic worth do give us guidelines which have to be worked out, hypotheses flowing out of the speculations of a master-mind which may scientifically be pursued. For all this, however, the first requisite is a clear knowledge of what Marx really said. This is all the more necessary today when we live in a period in which people rush into discussion without going through the tedious

process of study and stray out-of-contest quotations rule our debates.

Marx's remarks on Indian history can be conveniently grouped under five heads : the nature of India's ancient society ; the general framework and chronology of the history of India ; the role of the East India Company ; the character of the Revolt of 1857 ; and the consequences of British rule in India.

II

In a letter on India, dated 10 June 1873, Marx pointed out that the frequent upheavals in earlier Indian history "did not go deeper than its surface". Underneath all turmoil there lay "a social system of particular features—the so-called village system ...". He cited in support the 1812, official Commons Report and quoted from G. Campbell's *Modern India* (1852). He added that "There have been in Asia, generally, from immemorial times, but three departments of government : that of Finance, or the plunder of the interior ; that of war, or the plunder of the exterior ; and, finally, the department of Public Works". The last was necessitated by "climate and territorial conditions" which made indispensable "artificial irrigation". The low level of civilisation and the vast territorial extent of the orient demanded "for an economical and common use of water " "the interference of the centralising power of government", which failed to function at times and had to be restored again and again. This old social structure came down in India to British times, the units or village communities depending "on domestic industry, in that peculiar combination of hand-weaving, hand-spinning and hand-tilling agriculture which gave them self-supporting power". This is the society in India which the British dissolved.

Marx had no illusions about this simple venerable society. "These idyllic village communities—had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism—they restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional

rules." He described the resultant condition as "this undignified, stagnatory, and vegetative life - contaminated by distinctions of caste and by slavery". "I share not. the opinion of those who believe in a golden age of Hindustan."

The economic presentation of an unchanging Indian past has been criticised as undue simplification. But in any historical generalisation, in European history also for instance, detailed study will always reveal various facets which have been ignored in the long-range view. The central issue is whether the generalisation is basically wrong, and if so what is the better alternative general formulation. The mere existence of urban life or considerable commerce in the interstices of an agrarian society will not be enough to negate the picture of the domination of the village community and agriculture in ancient India, a picture which however must have been much more complex and less durable than Marx imagined. As for the possible social transformations in ancient India, no solid periodisation has yet been worked out in the fuller light of a century after Marx.

Quite understandably, Indian opinion is often outraged by the social evaluation above of ancient Indian society. Yet Marx himself noted in his letter on 22 July 1853 the "calm nobility" and "bravery" of the people of a country which he called "the source of our languages, our religions". In fairness to Marx, one has also to remember his viewpoint of the ardent advocate of a sweeping social revolution, to remember his scathing attack in the even earlier *Communist Manifesto* on the vaunted bourgeois civilisation of his own Europe, or time and again on British rule in India. Some of the best minds among the Indian Westerners, contemporaries more or less of Marx, would have or did express themselves on similar lines about traditional Indian life.

Finally, Marx's concept of an Asiatic Society of which India was a part was by no means an established concept like his bourgeois society. He was exploring the idea undogmatically for years after the *Letters on India*, without coming to

a final authoritative formulation. Simple hearts forget all this. I was recently amused to find in a Bengali periodical a learned 'Marxist' dissertation to the effect that, since Marx 'declared' that there was an Asiatic society in India which the British overcame, there could not have been any feudalism here and idea of an antifeudal revolution is therefore nonsense.

Indeed, the historical sketch presented by the mature Marx in *Precapitalist Economic Formation*, commonly called the *Formen*, written in 1857-58 and recently published, is fatal to a dogmatic periodisation of history. The Asiatic or oriental (including old Indian) society appears here as only a possible route out of the original primitive communal system of pre-history, a society which resisted (but not entirely excluded ?) historical evolution. The Asiatic society is not characterised in the *Formen* chiefly by the absence of property in land or by centralised public works and irrigation as suggested in 1853. The emphasis now is placed on "the self-sustaining unity of manufacture and agriculture" in the oriental villages which retarded economic evolution. Instead of Asiatic despotism as the general rule, it is now admitted that authority might have been "more despotic or more democratic" in form. The village communities might come under an "all-embracing unity" from above, which would then appear as "the higher or sole proprietor. the real communities only as hereditary possessors :... Oriental despotism therefore appears to lead to a legal absence of property." "Irrigation systems...means of communication, etc...appear as the work of the higher unity." In such a society cities of course also existed, but essentially as "locations for external Trade" or "princely camps".

This was followed up by the celebrated Preface to the *Critique of Political Economy* (1859) : "In broad outlines Asiatic, ancient, feudal, and modern bourgeois modes of production can be designated as progressive epoch in the economic formation of society" — an understanding reflected also in the *Capital* (1867). 'Progress' here obviously implies a general social un-

folding in "broad outlines" only, not the unilinear 'leap' from stage to stage in every case.

Marx never repudiated the concept of an Asiatic society, though he relegated it later on to "archaic Types" of social formation. But there was need for popular simplification to establish the idea of history as changes in social formation, and hence a need to push back the intricate discussions in the *Formen*. Thus Engels in his *Origins* (1884) divided prehistory into three stages after Morgan, and civilisation up to the time also into three epochs of exploitation - slavery, serfdom, wage-labour. The idea of only three class societies is a return to the simplicity of the *Manifesto* of 1848 and the *German Ideology* of 1845-46. Yet serious students cannot afford to forget the more complicated analysis in the *Formen* of 1857-58 or the *Critique* of 1859 which advanced the model of Asiatic society in the total picture of historical evolution.

The upshot of the matter is that Marx did not make a fetish of the Asiatic society, but certainly presented its theory for further exploration. Researchers today may with fuller knowledge examine the problems of its extent, nature and duration. They may tackle the allied question of the slave production relations, if any, in India, the rise and types of Indian feudalism and so on. Marx's concept is most important in the sense that it draws attention to the special condition in the East and helps to dissolve the facile idea of a unilinear historical evolution all over the world of a somewhat Hegelian pattern.

The uncertainty in the identification of specific social formations in history does not negate the basic ideas of Marx's historical materialism, tersely indicated in the Preface to the *Critique*, from which Marx never deviated: indispensable production relations independent of individual will; their correspondence to some definite historic stage of development in productive forces; the existence in any given time of a specific economic structure of society compounded of productive forces and production relations; the dependence

on this structure of the ideological superstructure of the period ; the inevitable clash in the course of development between the dynamic productive forces and the static production relations which now turn into "fetters" ; the consequent epoch of social revolution, "more or less" rapid social transformation. This vision of Marx remains a beacon light in social science, an unfailing inspiration even today.

III

Marx compiled for his own use a series of chronological notes on Indian history which he never revised or published. These notes testify however to his historical conscience, for surely chronology is the iron frame of history. In his Notes, he relied heavily on the accounts of Elphinstone and Sewell, the accepted authorities of his time.

The most serious omission here is the passing over of the entire Hindu epoch of our history, though it was being recovered by the European scholars of Marx's day. Obviously he must have felt that the absence of a solid chronological frame for the early period ruled out a satisfactory survey, which he wanted purely as a base for his search after economic sociopolitical development. The standard history of Elphinstone has very little of Hindu history.

Marx did mention the one indisputable date in ancient Indian history – Alexander's invasion of India in 327 B. C. It may be added that even Elphinstone seems to have been unaware of the other pre-Muslim invasions of India.

A few comments on ancient Indian social life from the *Notes* and elsewhere way be mentioned. The priest class was "the most powerful political class" in India. Hindustan was a "strange combination of Italy and of Ireland, of a world of voluptuousness and of a world of woes" – anticipated by ancient traditions of "a religion of sensualist exuberance and a religion of self-torturing asceticism."

The chronology of Muslim times being firm and indisputable, Marx's *Notes* begin from early Muslim invasions and

take us through the tangle of dynastic history and conquests up and down, with passing comments on Muslim law, land-tenure and feudalistic arrangements. The greater part of the *Notes* are however devoted to the process of British conquests, expansion and exploitation which was Marx's prime object of enquiry.

For all their fragmentary and perfunctory nature, some of Marx's remarks are penetrating indeed. The Black Hole was a "sham scandal" raised by "English hypocrites". Munro blew up the Patna rebels in a "philanthropic operation". The Company's servants built up their wealth through a "disgraceful system of oppression and extortion". Under the Permanent Settlement, the ryots were "absolutely at the mercy of their landlords". The Ryotwari system meant "absolute control over each district" by the collector. Wellesley's Fort William College serve "as hall for discussions amongst the natives upon matters of law and religion". Other items mentioned include... popular rebellions like those of the Choars, Titu Mir and the Santhal "guerrillas"; beneficial acts like the abolition of the 'sati', the first medical college, grant of a free press; big changes like canals, railways, electric telegraph and the direct sea-route to Europe.

IV

Marx's views on the role of the British East India Company are of special interest, revealing a deep historical insight. He was mainly concerned with the history of the Company's regime; its general character; the concrete exploitation of the Indian people; and the profits drawn from the Indian connection.

Marx summed up the history of the Company in a letter on 24 June 1853. The historic Company really begins in 1702, with the union of the rival societies and the authorisation of its monopoly by Parliament in the place of the earlier royal grants. The Company excluded the unprivileged commoner people from the India trade just as Parliament excluded them

from the franchise. The 17th century victory over feudal aristocracy was thus combined with keeping down the people. The Seven Years War turned the trading Company into a military territorial power. Naturally enough, English ministers and the ruling class now wanted a fuller share in the profit. Pitt's India Act established ministerial control by fraud rather by open avowal, through 'royal' rather than direct parliamentary commissioners, as Mill pointed out. The Anglo-Indian empire was firmly established by 1849 after a century of wars of conquest.

Economically, the Company had begun of necessity with the export of precious bullion to India, which was defended by Mun (1621) on the ground that the consequent imports from India secured thereby earned on reexport more bullion, thus making the final balance of payment favourable. In course of time, British manufacturers began to cry out for protection against imports from India, as we see in the discussion in Pollexfen (1697). After 1700, statutes thus restrained the imports of silk and calico in England. From the early 19th century, the Company's monopoly was battered down (Charter Acts of 1813 and 1833) by the manufacturing interest. India was now being turned from an exporting into an importing country open to the flow of English goods. By the middle of the 19th century, when it seemed that a saturation point for British products might be approaching, the English rulers began to toy with the idea of developing Indian productive power, of course on lines which would bring more profit to British capital.

Marx's succinct characterisation of the general nature of the Company's regime is equally perceptive. He laid bare the keynote in a passage in the letter on 10 June 1853: "European despotism, planted upon Asiatic despotism". This again was "only an imitation of the Dutch" model described by Raffles in his account of Java. The essence of the whole system lay in its being "actuated solely by the spirit of gain". It is difficult to

think of a more accurate summing up of the rule of the East India Company.

Marx's letter on 28 August 1857 is vivid illustration of at least one concrete aspect of the exploitation of the people under the Company's aegis, namely tortures, passed over in our history books. He drew the evidence from the Blue Books (1855-57) on the subject (reminiscent of the use of official reports relating to the exploitation of the English workers in *Capital* later on), with the fitting indictment: "The British rulers of India are by no means such mild and spotless benefactors of the Indian people as they would have the world believe."

The Madras Torture Commission (1855) admitted its "belief in the general existence of torture for revenue purposes". More people were subjected to violence annually for "non-payment of revenue" than for criminal charges. The Commission was impressed with the "difficulty of obtaining redress"; "No poverty-stricken ryot could contend against any wealthy revenue officer". There was "no legal means of punishment whatever for the employment of force in collecting the public revenue". Even Dalhousie confessed that "He has long ceased to doubt that torture in one shape or other is practised by the lower subordinates in every British Province" (September 1855). Not lower subordinates alone, Dalhousie said that Deputy Commissioner Brereton had subjected a great number "to gross injustice, to arbitrary imprisonment and cruel torture". Chief Commissioner Lawrence reported on Ludhiana: "Many parties were thrown into prison, and lay there for weeks, without charges being exhibited against them."

The Madras Native Association complained in January 1856 that no enquiry was made as "to what extent their superiors were acquainted with the practice" of the lower Hindu officials. Thus all complaints were referred to the tahsildars themselves for investigation, or else turned down at once. A Canara petition complained that the Company had "devised all sorts of plans to squeeze out money from us". The collectors and subordinates, "desirous of obtaining promotion on any

account whatever, neglect the welfare and interests on the people."

One complaint was to the affect that the defaulters were taken out in the sun, made to stoop with stones on their back, and kept the whole day on the burning sand. The treatment was repeated for three months on end. The collector refused to listen to complaints and property was distrained. Again when a regiment would pass through, provisions were exacted and people were tortured for asking for payment.

Marx characterised the profits drawn from India as largely "benefits which accrue to individual British subjects" (Letter of 21 September 1857).

Firstly, 3000 shareholders of the Company drew an annual dividend of £ 630,000. Secondly, there were about 100,000 recipients of patronage in India—the civil, clerical, medical, military, naval employees, coming out from Britain to hold lucrative situations in India. Thirdly, pensions and interest charges were drawn from India to the tune of "15 to 20 million dollars" annually. Fourthly, savings were brought back from India. Fifthly, about 6000 Europeans in India derived large profits from trade and speculation.

The nature of class rule is revealed here, for the mass of the British people bearing the expenses on the Indian account (mostly military) did not of course share in the spoils of empire directly. As for the Indians, no part of the taxes "is returned to the people on works of public utility", and nowhere do we find so extravagant a provision for the governing class itself. (Letter of 29 June 1858).

V

Marx's comments on the Revolt of 1857 constitute an original contribution to the study of contemporary Indian history. They are in sharp opposition to the established orthodox theory of regarding the rising as essentially a military mutiny, disfigured by 'native' atrocities, put down by British valour. It is

interesting to reflect that modern research is at long last veering round to the viewpoint of Marx.

Marx dealt in the main with the general character of the revolt ; the question of the atrocities committed ; and the conduct of the military struggle. He was ably seconded by Engels. Their understanding is all the more remarkable since the opinions were carried in letters to the *New York Daily Tribune* in the very course of events, or immediately after their occurrence.

Marx was almost the very first to grasp the true nature of the revolt. On 30 June 1857, he explained the fact that the sepoys were the first to rise by the pertinent observation that the Indian Army happened to be "the first general centre of resistance which the Indian people were over possessed of". On 28 July 1857, he quoted with approval Disraeli's remark on the previous day : "The Indian disturbance is not a military mutiny, but a national revolt." On 31 July 1857, Marx asserted that what John Bull considers to be a military mutiny "is in truth a national revolt".

Arguments in support of the conclusion are plentiful in the letters. On 30 June 1857, Marx was writing : "Mussulmans and Hindus...have combined against their common masters ;...the mutiny has not been confined to a few localities ;...the revolt has coincided with a general disaffection... on the part of the great Asiatic nations."

He described the so-called unaffected areas enjoying "a very queer sort of quiet" (31 July 1857), for symptoms of unrest were visible even there. He pointed out (14 August 1857) : "As to the talk about the apathy of the Hindus, or even their sympathy with British rule, it is all nonsense." For, "the great difficulties the English meet with in obtaining supplies and transports... the principal cause of the slow concentration of the troops... do not witness to the good feelings of the peasants". Marx saw correctly (15 Sept 1857) that the British posts were like "insulated rocks amid a sea of revolution".

Anticipating recent historians, Marx acutely observed that

after all "the first blow dealt to the French monarchy proceeded from the nobility, not from the peasants". In a similar fashion, the Indian Revolt started not with the "dishonoured ryots" but with the sepoys "clad, fed, petted, fattened and pampered" by the British (4 September 1857). As for the feudal leadership, Marx castigated the role of the princes like Sindhia and Engels pointed out on 17 September 1858 that the landholders came to an agreement with the British, thus betraying the cause.

As against such conduct at the top, Marx referred to the common people's role in Oudh (14 May 1858) : "The resistance, begun by a mutinous soldiery, he found support from the inhabitants of the city and of the province at large." Engels added at the end of May 1858 – "the unarmed population fail to afford the English either assistance or information". Also (17 September 1858) "attempts at confiscating the Kingdom of Oudh... have not created any particular fondness for the victors.... The hereditary hatred against the Christian intruder is more fierce than ever". Again, "this second conquest has not increased England's hold upon the mind of the people". (*Ibid*)

On the question of atrocities in the course of the Revolt, Marx adopted in the midst of all the excitement a sane balanced view worthy of a true historian. On the one hand he recognised the provocations given to the Indians, and on the other he pointed out that, though the Indians did indulge in cruelty, the hands of the British were not overclean.

He put the issue bluntly enough, asking (28 August 1857) – "whether a people are not justified in attempting to expel the foreign conquerors who have so abused their subjects". Again : "Is it surprising that the insurgent Hindus should be guilty, in the fury of revolt and conflict, of the crimes and cruelties alleged against them ?" On 4 September 1857 he added : "However infamous the conduct of the sepoys, it is only the reflex, in a concentrated form, of England's own conduct in India.... There is something in human history like retribution."

Marx did not know, what is now known, that British atro-

cities began at least as early as the outrages committed on the Indian side. Yet he did shrewdly remark (4 September 1857): it was "a mistake to suppose all the cruelty is on the side of the sepoys.... The letters of British officers are redolent of malignity.... 'Whole villages were burned down'.... An officer from Benares... says: 'The European troops have become fiends when opposed to natives'... The outrages of the natives, shocking as they are, are still deliberately exaggerated...."

To find parallels to sepoy atrocities, Marx (4 September 1857) referred to the earlier incidents of the First China War when the English committed "abominations for the mere fun of it", recorded not by the mandarins but by the British officers themselves. "Cruelty, like every other thing, has its fashion" apparently.

On 8 May 1858, Engels was writing: "There is no army in Europe and America with so much brutality as the British.... For twelve days and nights, there was no British army at Lucknow - nothing but a lawless, drunken, brutal rabble - far more lawless, violent and greedy than the sepoys... The sack of Lucknow in 1858 will remain an everlasting disgrace to the British military service.

Marx noted (14 May 1858) that "the proprietary right in the soil of the province of Oudh is confiscated to the British Government", adding that this was indeed a fitting commentary on the British indignation at the confiscations of the Russians in Poland (1831), of the Austrians in Lombardy (1849) and of Louis Bonaparte in 1851. Canning's action amounted to the seizure of "the inheritance of a whole people in the words of Ellenborough and was "an infraction of not only the treaty" (of 1801), "but of every principle of the law of nation". Marx added - "the natives of India are now beginning to avenge themselves.

On 4 June 1858, Engels recalled the report of Russell of the *Times* to the effect that in the sack of Lucknow privates have won 'thousands of pounds', and some officers 'have made, literally, their fortunes'. He referred on 17 September 1858 to

"the cruelty of the retribution dealt out by the British troops, goaded on by exaggerated and false reports of the atrocities attributed to the natives".

We know that Marx was interested in military matters to some extent, Engels to a greater. It is no surprise therefore to find them commenting on the military struggle in the Indian revolt.

They were sceptical about the praise showered on the British conduct of the campaigns Marx wrote on 31 July 1857 that the British concentration round Delhi was extremely slow; this was attributed to the season, when "the heat proves an invincible obstacle, which it did not in the days of Sir Charles Napier". On 29 September 1857, he again commented on English military blunders—the failure to concentrate and needless dispersal of available troops.

Engels was blunter. He remarked on 16 November 1857 ; "No people, not even the French, can equal the English in selflaudation." But the courage shown at Delhi was "not so very extraordinary".

For all their sympathy with the Indian rebels, Marx and Engels were not unmindful of our ineptitude in the whole affair. Marx wrote on 30 October 1857 about the internal dissensions in the Delhi rebel camp, between the Mughal merchants and sepoys, between Hindus and Muslims. Engels drew attention on 8 May 1858 to the Indian drawbacks, "the ignorance of military engineering" and total indiscipline. On 6 July 1858, he argued that "the fate of the insurrection is dependent upon its being able to expand". And on 17 September 1858 he concluded that the rebels had failed to conduct an active guerrilla warfare of harassing the enemy, of reorganising their forces in the respite granted by the summer and rains. Earlier, Engels had written to Marx : "The sepoys must have defended the enceinte of Delhi poorly" (29 Oct. 1857) and "we have not heard in a single instance that any insurrectionary army in India had been properly constituted under a recognised chief" (31 Dec. 1857).

VI

Marx's formulations on the consequences of British rule in India, set forth in the two famous letters on 10 June 1853 and 22 July 1853, are the most familiar part of his remarks on India, indeed so familiar that quite unfairly they have tended to obscure the corpus of his total views. They are not final dogmatic conclusions any more than the rest of his opinions and do not rule out further study and discussion. Nevertheless they are highly suggestive and can never be ignored by any serious student of Indian history.

"England has broken down the entire framework of Indian society", he said, "without any symptoms of reconstitution yet appearing." This judgement cannot be taken isolatedly in a literal sense, for elsewhere a part of the verdict is modified by Marx himself.

Marx rightly pointed out that previous oppression in India "did not go deeper than its surface". "Misery inflicted by the British on Hindustan is of an essentially different and infinitely more intensive kind than all Hindustan had to suffer before." Even more than the neglect of irrigation and agriculture, "it was the British intruder who broke up the Indian handloom and destroyed the spinning wheel... and inundated the very mother country of cotton with cottons... British steam and science uprooted...the union between agriculture and manufacturing industry". The British "have dissolved these small semibarbarian semicivilised" village communities based on the domestic union of spinning-weaving and agriculture, "by blowing up their economical basis, and thus produced the greatest, and to speak the truth, the only social revolution ever heard of in Asia". It is difficult to deny the fundamental truth in this, however over-emphatic the simplification might appear in the light of detailed and intensive research.

And one cannot deny also the dictum; "England...was actuated only by the vilest interest"...but none the less "she was the unconscious tool of history."

As indicated above, Marx's denial of any "symptoms of

reconstitution" was modified by himself when he said that the "unconscious" historic task of England was double — destructive (uprooting the old society) and regenerating (laying of material foundations of a modern society in India).

Marx's indictment of the destructive role is severe enough. He said that "the profound hypocrisy and inherent barbarism of bourgeois civilisation lies unveiled before our eyes, turning from its home, where it assumes respectable forms, to the colonies, where it goes naked." Thus in India, the defenders of property have unleashed agrarian revolutions; the protectors of national debt have confiscated princely funds; the champions of religion have profited by the vices in the temples.

Yet, bourgeois industry and commerce do create material conditions for a new world, like "a geological revolution". This will happen in India as well. Social revolution has to master "the results of the bourgeois epoch, the market of the world and the modern powers of production".... All this is undeniable and prophetic.

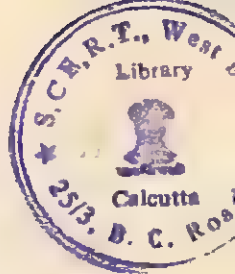
Marx listed the conditions of regeneration which could already be seen in India in mid-19th century, before there was a national movement; political unity (perpetuated by the electric telegraph); trained Indian army (the sine qua non of self-emancipation); steam communication; definite private property in land (zamindari and ryotwari); a free press; a "fresh class" ("reluctantly and sparingly educated at Calcutta — imbued with European science").

Marx also felt the epoch-making impact of the railways on India. Railways held out the prospects of a fair distribution of the produce; irrigation along the lines (excavated tanks, parallel water-ways); economy in military stores; effective mobility of troops; intercourse between hitherto-isolated villages; relaxation of caste-restrictions; industrial fabrication to meet immediate needs of railway locomotion, with the spread of machinery to other industries also; release of the intellectual energy latent in Indian engineers and employees,

It is difficult indeed to improve upon either list - the forces of regeneration and the possibilities of the railways.

The English bourgeoisie of course "will neither emancipate nor materially mend the social conditions of the mass of the people.... But what they will not fail to do is to lay down the material premises for both". And Marx added, not quite unfairly : "Has the bourgeoisie ever done more ? Has it ever effected a progress without dragging individuals and peoples through blood and dirt, through misery and degradation ?" - The rhetoric may be discounted, but the conclusion cannot be just discarded.

Marx was also not far wrong in concluding that "the Indians will not reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered among them" by the British, till the working class comes to power in Britain or the Indians themselves "shall have grown strong enough to throw off the English yoke altogether". He himself at any rate confidently looked forward "to see, at a more or less remote period, the regeneration" of our great and interesting country. It came perhaps earlier than he expected, if it has really come at all.



THE THOUGHT OF GRAMSCI

Life

The name of Antonio Gramsci as a foremost Marxist leader reached our country barely a decade back. Even in his own Italy, his reputation was established only after the fall of Fascism, with the publication of his mature writings and other material on him ; today an Instituto Gramsci at Rome is engaged in a study of his thought. The postwar Italian Communist Party has been largely guided by his ideas ; and his importance is being increasingly appreciated elsewhere as well, in the renaissance of Marxism set in motion by the Twentieth Congress. Two English books help us in understanding him : Dr. Louis Mark's translation, 1957, of the *Modern Prince and Other Writings* (Lawrence and Wishart) and Professor John Cammett's *Antonio Gramsci*, 1967 (Stanford University Press).

Antonio Gramsci was born on 22 January 1891 in a poor family in backward Sardinia. At four, an accident turned him into a hunch-backed half-cripple. His school education was interrupted for a time because of parental poverty, and at eleven he was working 10 hours a day in his father's office to eke out the family income. Yet he developed a passion for reading and won a scholarship to enter Turin University in 1911, where Togliatti was his fellow-student and intimate friend. At Turin, young Antonio imbibed Crocean idealism from Professor Cosmo and shone in linguistic studies under Professor Bartoli who was grieved beyond measure when his brightest pupil deserted a most promising academic career without waiting for a degree for the sake of political work. Academic training however had become a part of him ; in

later life he could act as the dramatic critic to the *Avanti*, was one of the first appraisers of Pirandello, and produced in prison almost a commentary of the tenth canto of Dante's *Inferno*.

By 1913, Gramsci was deep in the activity of the Socialist Youth Federation, proving to be an effective teacher of the workers. In 1914 he joined the Turin section of the Socialist Party, rising gradually to the section's directorate. After the 1917 August insurrection at Turin, he was the editor of *Gido del Popolo*.

His first major work was *La Citta Futura* of February 1917. He dwelt in it on the power of the will, guided by an analysis of reality, disciplined by the party, to effect fundamental changes.

On May 1, 1919, Gramsci and his friends founded a weekly Communist cultural review, *L'Ordine Nuovo*, which tried to combine the proletarian cultural renewal with a real political movement. It carried over 200 articles by Gramsci in two years. In the factory 'internal commissions' or workshop committees, Gramsci saw the Italian prototype of the Soviets, the democratic organ of workers' self-government. *L'Ordine Nuovo* therefore campaigned for the organization, transformation, and extension of the internal factory committees, with distinct success in the Turin region.

The failure of the Factory Councils movement, followed by that of the 'occupation' of the factories in 1920, was attributed by Gramsci to the apathy of the Socialist leadership. He was now convinced of the prior necessity for renewal of the Party on the lines of the 21 conditions laid down by the Third International to which Italian Socialists had formally adhered. In October 1920, he signed the draft Communist Manifesto of Milan, confirmed by the Imola 'Congress' next month. *L'Ordine Nuovo* under him turned into a daily from January 1, 1921 to propagate the new ideas. He was a delegate to the Livorno Party Congress in 1920 January, but, diffident in public speaking, he left to Terracini the exposition

of *L'Ordine Nuovo's* views. At Livorno, the Party was split, as Serrati, its leader, refused to exclude the reformists.

The Italian Communist Party, founded on 21 January 1921, elected Gramsci to its first Central Committee. In May 1922, he was sent to Moscow as the Party representative at the Comintern Executive. He suffered from a 6 month's breakdown ; but in Russia he met Giulia and enjoyed the only spell of purely personal happiness in his life. Giulia bore him two children.

He had to return to Italy in 1924, to take up under Fascist oppression the Party Secretaryship from the extremist sectarian hands of Bordiga. *L'Unita* (after periods of suppression, the official Party organ even now) was founded by Gramsci on 12 February 1924. It preached the united front of the period, all the more necessary in the West where social democracy was a reality. The Party under Fascist repression had now to exist in a semi-clandestine fashion ; but the aim was laid down for a mass party. In 1926, in an essay on the Southern question, Gramsci worked out the implications in *L'Ordine Nuovo* of 1920 and focussed attention on the necessity of understanding the South to forge a proletarian-peasant alliance. The original ideas of Gramsci were enshrined in the Lyons Theses (specially Nos. 3-18) in 1926. Here we have a distinction between South and North Italy, a gulf between the 'countryside' and the 'city', somewhat reminiscent of Mao and Lin Pi-ao, with the vital difference that, according to Gramsci, the revolutionary impulse comes from the 'city'.

On 8 November 1926, Gramsci was arrested by Mussolini's police. At the trial in May 1928, the prosecutor demanded : "for 20 years we must stop that brain from working". In the fortnight's journey after the sentence to the Turi di Bari prison, Gramsci was chained to a cattle-truck so that he could neither lie down nor stand up. In the first prison years, he was awakened "for inspection" three times every night. Yet he could write to his sister-in-law : 'If you beat your head against the wall, it is your head which breaks and not the wall'. He strug-

gled tenaciously to obtain from the highest authorities the minimum legal facilities for reading and writing.

The result was the *Quaderni del Carcere* or Prison Notes, 2848 closely packed pages in 32 note-books. Difficult to understand because of necessary circumlocutions (Marxism becomes the 'philosophy of praxis', Lenin Illici, classes 'social groups' etc.), the disjointed thought, and the terseness of language, the notes (published between 1948 and 1951) are of perennial interest. Dr. Marks, his translator, has aptly commented : "Each re-reading will be found to reveal fresh subtleties of thought - which at first may 'be missed".

At last in January 1936, Gramsci was transferred to clinics for overdue treatment, but immediately after the remission of sentence because of illness, he passed away on 27 April 1937, before he could see his wife and children again.

Gramsci had rare independence of mind, rare indeed at the height of the Soviet spell. On 14 October 1926, he had the courage to write to the C. P. S. U. leadership, immersed then in internecine strife : 'Today you are destroying your work. You are degrading, and running the risk of nullifying,... Lenin's work.' He was critical of the ultra-revolutionary line of the Sixth Comintern Congress. He felt it was mechanical to expect revolution as a direct result of the world slump ; 'objective conditions for the proletarian revolution have existed in Europe for more than fifty years', after all ; what was needed was to 'be more political'. He recognised that Fascism had a broad social base, distinct from the old ruling classes, which however would crack in time with its own contradictions. In his talks with his prison comrades at Turi, he held that class alliances were absolutely necessary in Italy and advanced the popular slogan of a Constituent Assembly to rally all people disaffected with Fascism. All this antedated the change of line at the Seventh Congress.

2

Concept of Hegemony

Central to all Gramsci's thinking is the concept of Hegemony. Hegemony, of course, was one of Lenin's great ideas, but Gramsci's presentation was perhaps a wider and deeper analysis.

Gramsci distinguished two different areas in the superstructure: 'political society' made up of public institutions and organs of coercion (army, police, judiciary, administrative bureaucracy); and 'civil society', the totality of private institutions (churches, schools, unions, political parties). Hegemony is the predominance, obtained by consent rather than force, consent secured through the agency of 'private' institutions in the realm of civil society, of one class over other classes. Gramsci's *Egemonia* or Hegemony is described in the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 1960, by G. A. Williams as "an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society...informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religions and political principles, and all social relations".

Gramsci himself puts forward his concept with great clarity: 'we can fix two great "floors" of the superstructure: that which can be called "civil society" i. e. all the organisations which are commonly called "private", and that of "political society or the State", - which correspond (respectively) to the function of "hegemony" which the ruling class exercises over the whole of society, and to that of "direct rule" or of command which is expressed in the State and in "juridical" government. Intellectuals are the "officers" of the ruling class for the exercise of the subordinate functions of social hegemony and political government, i. e. (1) of the "spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the direction imprinted on social life by the fundamental ruling class, a consent which comes into existence "historically" from the "prestige" (and hence from the trust) accruing to the ruling class from its position and its function in the world of production; and (2) of

the apparatus of State coercion, which "legally" ensures the discipline of these groups which do not "consent" either actively or passively, but is constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis in command and direction when spontaneous consent diminishes'.

The difference between the two societies is certainly basic, but Gramsci did not bring out the possible interpenetration between their respective functions. Thus, State-power itself may undertake a certain amount of persuasion (official propaganda of explanation, appeals to patriotism and loyalty, etc.) to supplement its coercive authority. On the other hand, private institutions (like churches and parties) may indulge in some coercion on its adherents.

It remains to be added that a rising class, even before advent to State-power, can and does aspire after hegemony over other classes, to assert its capacity to become the ruling class, to demonstrate its own *weltanschauung* on political, cultural, or ethical fields. Similarly, a class pushed out from State-power may struggle for, and even succeed for a time in, retaining hegemony over others through its continuing hold over the institutions of civil society.

In the Socialist State, direct political rule takes the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, rooted essentially in coercive authority. It must never be forgotten that this has to be supplemented by 'social hegemony' of the ruling proletarian class, the winning of willing consent of the masses. Without this equilibrium, the stability of the workers' State itself is in jeopardy. Was this the lesson which was ignored in East Europe under Stalinist auspices ?

The problem of hegemony becomes particularly important after a period of revolutionary upsurge, in Europe after 1815 and 1921 for example. Where a new ruling class has attained power, it has to strive after stability through hegemony rather than direct coercion. Even elsewhere, the class struggle in such circumstances passes from a 'war of manouvre' to a 'war of position', mainly on the cultural front.

Gramsci firmly believed that, for the aspiring proletariat, the struggle for social hegemony was all the more important in the West. Here, however unstable the State power might appear to be, behind it stood 'a robust structure of civil society' (as in our own tradition-bound country perhaps), unlike Russia where 'civil society was primordial and gelatinous'. In the West, a 'war of position' was indeed inevitable, for Gramsci held that the seizure of power was unlikely here without a prior hegemonic victory of the workers in the domain of civil society.

3

L'Ordine Nuovo

Gramsci's *L'Ordine Nuovo* was a most remarkable journal in the annals of Marxism. Quite possibly, the famous *Rinascita* of Togliatti is a conscious revival of the earlier endeavour.

The first objective of *L'Ordine Nuovo* was to prepare the working class for social hegemony by developing its own capacity for culture. Gramsci wrote much later :

'From the moment when a subordinate class becomes really independent and dominant, calling into being a new type of State, the need arises concretely of building a new intellectual and moral order, i. e. a new type of society, and hence the need to elaborate the most universal concepts, the most refined and decisive ideological weapons'.

The task begins even before the accession to power. Gramsci pointed out : 'Every revolution has been preceded by hard critical thinking'. The working class therefore must create its own enlightenment, based on knowledge of 'the others'. Mere technical education benefits mostly the industrialists. What must be cultivated is a wider world outlook.

Gramsci's editorial in *L'Ordine Nuovo* on 12 July 1919 states :

'It is essential to convince the workers and peasants that it is above all in their own interest to submit to the permanent discipline of education, and to create a conception of their own of the world'.

In the editorial on 23 August 1919, on the approach of the Fourth Centenary of Leonardo da Vinci, Gramsci wrote :

'A Communist cultural review... should encourage the complete development of one's mental capacities for a higher and fuller life... why cannot we ourselves, with our modest forces, begin the work of the education system of the future among the youth.... Are there not already workers whom the class struggle has given a new sense of dignity and liberty who -when they hear of the poet's songs and the names of artists and thinkers- ask bitterly : "why have not we, too, been taught these things ?"... In the documentation of ideas transmitted to us by a millenium of work and thought there are elements which have eternal value, which cannot and must not perish.... This must begin to be done, wherever the proletariat is approaching the maturity necessary for social change.'

As Lenin put it in his *What is to be Done*, the workers may very well say to the intellectuals : "talk to us less of what we already know, and tell us more about what we do not know and what we can never learn from our factory and 'economic' experience".

In December 1919 was started a School of Culture and Propaganda. But obviously, workers' education cannot be divorced from their material life. Gramsci reflected later in prison :

'*L'Ordine Nuovo* worked, week by week, to develop certain forms of new intellectualism.... The mode of existence of the new intellectual... must consist of being actively involved in practical life as a builder, an organiser, "permanently persuasive" because he is not purely an orator...'

The program of the paper in August 1920 recalled the fact that 'the problem of the development of the Factory Committees became the central problem, it became the *idea* of *L'Ordine Nuovo*'. Thus cultural education was being linked up with actual political movement. Gramsci continued :

'In the Factory Councils the worker, because of his very

nature, plays the role of producer as a result of his position and function in society, in the same way as the citizen plays his role in the democratic parliamentary state.'

The program of the Factory Councils, in the issue on 8 November 1919, declared for the election by all workers in a factory of commissars from whom was to be chosen the new executive committee to take the place of the old familiar internal committee. The tasks laid down were threefold: defence of labour rights, workers' education, preparation for the eventual seizure of the factory. Useful technical innovations were to be accepted, even if proposed by the management, to cultivate the sense of being a producer and not a mere wage-earner. 'The factory council is the model of the proletarian state.' Gramsci added that 'the formation of a system of councils represents the first concrete assertion of the communist revolution in Italy'.

The Factory Council was conceived as being quite distinct from trade unions which under capitalism are primarily, often enough exclusively, only organs bargaining for the sale of labour-power. The Councils were organised as units of production, inculcating the consciousness of the possibility of a take-over in industry and the sense of consequent responsibility. The Councils were elected representatives of the entire workers, not voluntary associations like the Party. It would be a challenge to the Party to try to win a friendly majority in the councils as was the case in the early soviets. To impose the Party by command on the councils is wrong — this was the German mistake in 1919. The working class must be the embodiment of the true revolution, the Party is only the agent.

L'Ordine Nuovo was aware of the necessity of winning the peasants over to alliance with the workers. Gramsci's editorial of 3 January 1920 drew attention to the Mezzogiorno problem, the Southern Question, which he elaborated in the famous essay of 1926.

'It is necessary, in order to win the trust and consent of

the peasants and of the semi-proletarian categories in the cities, to overcome prejudices and conquer certain egoistic traits which can exist and do exist in the working class... a class which can conquer and build socialism only if aided and followed by the great majority of these social strata.'

The Turin Communists supported the division of the lands, but only 'as subordinate to united class action'. They warned against any illusions of miraculous results from 'the mechanical partition of the estates'. After all, 'what does the poor peasant gain by invading uncultivated or badly cultivated lands? Without machines, without a dwelling... without credit - without cooperative institutions...?'

The *L'Ordine Nuovo* editorial affirmed:

'The economic regeneration of the peasants must not be sought in dividing up the uncultivated and badly cultivated lands, but in solidarity with the industrial proletariat, which in its turn needs the solidarity of the peasants.... In imposing workers' control over industry, the proletariat will direct industry towards the production of agricultural machinery for the peasants, of textiles and shoes for the peasants, and of electrical energy for the peasants; it will prevent industry and the banks carrying out any further exploitation of the peasants... the workers will break all the chains which bind the peasant to poverty and despair... the proletariat will direct the enormous power of state organisation towards helping the peasants in their struggle against the landowners, against nature and poverty; it will give credit to the peasants, institute cooperatives, guarantee personal security and property against plunderers, and carry out public expenditure for development and irrigation...'

Allied to the peasant question in Italy is the hold of the Catholic Church over the masses in the countryside. Gramsci welcomed the rise of the Catholic Popular Party of Sturzo (1919). It marked the end of the long political abstention of the Italian Catholics and implied that the Church was turning from other-worldliness to the mundane material needs of the

masses and building up 'associationism' among the peasants untouched by the factory model of organisation. The competition of the Popular Party with Socialism was to Gramsci no cause for alarm. After all, Socialism heading for a political 'civil war' need not saddle itself with a 'religious war' as well ; the workers' State would be obliged in any case to seek an equilibrium with the Catholic masses representing a true political force. In this Gramscian analysis perhaps lies the germ of the 'dialogue' which the Italian Communist Party is trying to carry on today with the immense Catholic population.

4

Role of the Intellectuals

The position of the intellectuals is normally neglected in Marxian literature. Very many passages in the *Quaderni del Carcere* indicate however Gramsci's deep concern with the problem.

His analysis starts with the comment—'All men are intellectuals, one could therefore say ; but all men do not have the function of intellectuals in society. Thus, since anyone at any time can fry a couple of eggs or mend a hole in a jacket, we do not say that everyone is a cook or a tailor'.

Intellectuals are divided into two broad categories—'organic' and 'traditional'.

(1) Every social class, coming into existence on the original basis of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates with itself, organically, one or more groups of intellectuals who give it homogeneity and consciousness... : the capitalist entrepreneur creates with himself the industrial technician, the political economist, the organiser of a new culture, of a new law, etc.... Feudal lords as well possessed a particular technical ability : military ability ;... the mass of the peasants... do not elaborate their own "organic" intellectuals... although other social groups take many of their intellectuals from the peasant masses...

'(2) But every "essential" social class emerging into history from the preceding economic structure... has found... intellectual categories which were pre-existing and which, moreover, appeared as representatives of an historical continuity.... The most typical of these intellectual categories is that of the ecclesiastics, monopolisers for a long time... of certain important services... the intellectual category organically tied to the landed aristocracy.... Just as these various categories of traditional intellectuals have a sense of their own uninterrupted historical continuity... so they see themselves as autonomous and independent of the ruling social group... the whole of idealist philosophy can easily be connected with this assumed position of the social complex of intellectuals, and may be defined as the expression of this social utopia through which intellectuals believe themselves to be "independent", autonomous, clothed in their own characters, etc....

'One of the most important characteristics of every class which develops toward power is its struggle to assimilate and conquer "ideologically" the traditional intellectuals. Assimilations and conquests are the more rapid and effective the more the given social class puts forward simultaneously its own organic intellectuals....

'The intellectuals develop slowly, much more slowly than any other social group, because of their own nature and historical role. They represent the whole cultural tradition of a people, and they wish to recapitulate and synthetise the whole of (its) history.... To think it possible that this type can, as a mass, break with the whole of the past in order to place itself wholeheartedly on the side of a new ideology, is absurd. ... But it is also important and useful that a break of an organic kind... is caused inside the mass of the intellectuals: that there is formed... a left-wing tendency ...'

Gramsci added that there is a 'horizontal' distinction between the traditional and organic intellectuals. Another distinction was 'vertical', between 'specialists' engaged in organising a particular sectional activity, and the 'directors' with

more 'political' vision — who will organise society in general to 'create the most favourable conditions for the expansion of the class' whose interests they serve.

'...the very function of organising social hegemony and State rule gives rise to a certain division of labour and so to a certain gradation of qualifications... in the highest grade will have to be placed the creators of various sciences, of philosophy, art, etc., in the lowest, the most humble "administrators" and propagators of already existing traditional and accumulated intellectual riches'.

The industrial proletariat has mostly relied on merely 'assimilated' traditional intellectuals. Gramsci's *L'Ordine Nuovo* aimed at developing intellectuals originating in the proletariat. A proletarian intellectual starts with technical education, but from technical work he arrives at technical science and historical humanistic views, without which he would remain a 'specialist' merely and could not become a 'director'.

Again, organic intellectuals representing the dominant class provide personnel for the coercive organs of political society or the State. Traditional intellectuals mainly endeavour to win the consent of the people in the area of civil society.

'The problem of the functionaries partly coincides with the problem of the intellectuals. But, if it is true that every new form of society and State has had need of a new type of functionary, it is also true that new ruling social groups have never been able to put aside, at least for a certain time, the formation of functionaries already existing.'

Gramsci suggested as a line of solution, of this problem in the modern context, in 'unity of manual and intellectual work and a closer link between the legislative and the executive power' — thinking evidently of the Paris Commune — Soviet model.

It is wrong to minimise the importance of really competent intellectuals. Gramsci commented :

'Bukharin only wants to attack the weakest people and on their weakest points... in order to win easy verbal victories....

In the political and military struggle it may be good tactics to break through at the points of least resistance.... On the ideological front, however, defeat of the auxiliaries and the minor followers has an almost negligible importance ; on this front it is necessary to defeat the eminent people....'

Gramsci also had a word of wisdom regarding the correct policy towards the intellectuals, worth following in spite of the attendant risks and difficulty in implementation. Only greater risks result from a neglect of the advice :

'It seems necessary that the hard work for the research for new truths and for better, more coherent and clear formulation of the truths themselves should be left to the free initiative of individual scholars, even if they continually replace in discussion the very principles which appear most essential. Besides, it will not be difficult to make clear when such discussions have interested motives and are not of a scientific character.'

5

The Historical Process

Gramsci had an abiding interest in History. In his last letter to his elder son, he wrote :

'I think you like History, just as I did when I was your age, because it is about living men. And everything that is about men, as many men as possible, all the men in the world united among themselves in societies, working and struggling and bettering themselves must please you more than any other thing.'

Gramsci sharply distinguished historical economism, of Professor Loria for example, from Marx's historical materialism. 'It often happens', he pointed out, 'that people attack historical economism believing they are attacking historical materialism'.

'...historical economism...does not distinguish what is "relatively permanent" from what is an occasional fluctuation, and by an economic fact it means the personal self-interest of

of a small group, in a direct and "dirty Jewish sense"...economic development is reduced to a succession of technical changes in the instruments of labour.... In its most widespread form of economist superstition, Marxism loses a great part of its cultural expansiveness in the higher sphere of the intellectual group, in return for what it gains among the popular masses and the mediocre intellectuals.... As Engels wrote, it is very convenient for many people to believe they have... all political and philosophical wisdom concentrated in a few formulae...

'...the result is...the loss of all voluntary initiative aiming to predispose this situation according to a plan,... at certain moments the automatic drive due to the economic factor is slowed down, cramped or even broken up momentarily by traditional ideological elements. There must, therefore, be a consciously planned struggle.... An appropriate political initiative is always necessary to free the economic drive from the tethers of traditional policies...'

Gramsci maintained that the historical process is not automatic and mechanical, but the result of the struggle of forces some of which are conscious elements. To quote again,

'It is the problem of the relation between structures and superstructures which needs to be posed exactly and resolved in order to reach a correct analysis of the forces working in the history of a certain period and determine their relationship.... in studying a structure, it is necessary to distinguish organic movements (relatively permanent) from movements which could be called "incidental" (which appear as occasional, immediate, almost accidental).... A crisis appears which sometimes lasts for decades. This exceptional duration means that incurable contradictions have appeared...in the structure, and that the political forces working positively for the preservation and defence of the same structure are exerting themselves nevertheless to heal them within certain limits...'

The conclusion is drawn: 'every shortcoming in historical duty increases the necessary disorder and prepares more serious catastrophes'.

Wrong understanding of the historical process leads naturally to oversimplified wrong conclusions. Thus, Gramsci continued in his *Modern Prince* :

'The error often committed in historical-political analysis consists in having been unable to find the correct relationship between what is organic and what is occasional... one's own inferior and immediate desires and passions are the cause of error, in so far as they are substituted for objective and impartial analysis, and this happens not as a conscious "means" to stimulate action but as self-deceit....'

It is this flexible approach which enabled Gramsci, unlike most of his comrades, to anticipate in the manifesto of *L'Ordine Nuovo* in May 1919 the possibility of a Fascist triumph in Italy – either a proletarian conquest of power or 'a tremendous reaction by the propertied classes'.

Gramsci's concrete references to the past historical process are often enough quite penetrating.

The Renaissance, he felt, remained aristocratic and could not activate the masses; the Reformation achieved popular participation, but at a cost of intellectual sterility for a long period; the French Revolution; fired the people but 'even it had no immediate flowering on a high cultural level'.

In France by 1871, 'not only did the new class struggling for power conquer the representatives of the old society...but it also conquered the newest groups which held that the new structure...was already outdated and thus showed that it was alive in comparison with the old and the very new'. Such a comment on the Paris Commune did require courage in a Communist – though passages from Marx himself can be cited in its support.

Again, 'with 1870-71 all the principles of political strategy and tactics born in practice in 1789 and developed ideologically around 1848 lost their efficacy (those which are summed up

in the formula of the "permanent revolution"...). Engels' testimony would confirm this.

'It is precisely the study' [in French history from 1789 to 1871] of these "waves" of varying frequency which allows us to reconstruct the relations between structure and superstructure, on the one hand, and, on the other, between the development of organic movement and incidental movement in the structure.... It can be excluded that, by themselves, economic crises directly produce fundamental events; they can only create a more favourable ground for the propagation of certain ways of thinking... the decisive element in every situation is the force, permanently organised and pre-ordered over a long period, which can be advanced when one judges that the situation is favourable... therefore the essential task is that of paying systematic and patient attention to forming and developing this force...'

Quite appropriately, Gramsci devoted much thinking to Italian history, especially the history of the intellectuals. He thought that the 'non-nazionale-popolare' character of the Italian intellectuals was rooted in history.

Classical Rome formed its intellectuals mainly from Greeks and oriental freedmen reinforced by non-Romans lured by citizenship. The Church continued this cosmopolitan detachment by drawing in men from all over Europe into its hierarchy. The Church, as a universal yet secular power, developed a natural opposition to Italian nationalism. Latin and even the literary Italian had little connection with the masses; the mediaeval city-states had their 'organic' intellectuals but could not 'assimilate' the 'traditional' intellectuals, and in their particularism gravitated to Papal or Imperial camps. The Renaissance was 'regressive' from the national-popular view, destroying even the city-particularism, diverting able men to the pursuit of activity unrelated to national problems, even to the search after personal success. The 'Italianisation' of the Church, aimed at preserving its universal position, strengthened 'supra-nationalism'. Thus the

entire Italian intellectual tradition was a barrier to political unification.

Machiavelli was the outstanding exception. He alone showed a 'precocious Jacobinism'. His idea of a national militia was a step in this direction, and his *Prince* was a manifesto of national unification.

The Jacobin theory is a 'political' approach to society with the aim of radicalisation. The Jacobins, 'a new elite', wanted, for the bourgeoisie of course, 'the hegemonic leadership of all the popular forces'. They opposed compromises that might isolate the bourgeoisie from its popular base. Machiavelli's *Prince* was an anticipation of this Jacobinism.

Gramsci's analysis of the Risorgimento is equally suggestive. In this movement, the leadership was at stake between the 'Moderates' (Cavour-D' Azeglio) and the 'Actionists' (Mazzini-Garibaldi). The former, capitalistic intellectuals truly 'organic' to bourgeois-aristocratic classes, established its hegemony by a 'gradual but continual absorption'. The latter, with no close connection with the heterogeneous groups they wanted to represent, failed to advance a Jacobin social program.

Recently, Gramsci's views on the Risorgimento have been attacked by the historian Romeo, but the criticism can be effectively answered. The Agrarian Question is not as Romeo thought a 20th century innovation; ample evidence exists for its presence during and even before the Risorgimento. The failure to advance a Jacobin program did lead to a compromise between the new bourgeoisie and the old landed aristocracy. Southern backwardness, due to the rejection of a peasant program, was not even a necessary condition, as Romeo thought, of capitalist accumulation necessary for a time for the good of all Italy; it has persisted ever since, instead of being temporary, and the gap between North and South has even widened. Gramsci did not deny that Cavour's politics was correct for the era; but 'they proposed to build a modern State in Italy and they produced a kind of bastard'. Machioro has written that it might be dangerous to hypothesize alternate

possibilities in history, but it is more dangerous "to make what happened in the past not only the real history – which it is – but also the ideal history". And Salvemini dryly remarks: "I do not remove my hat before accomplished facts".

6

Problems of Philosophy

'The fundamental innovation introduced by Marxism', according to Gramsci, 'into the science of politics and history is the proof that there does not exist an abstract, fixed and immutable "human nature" (a concept which certainly derives from religious thought and transcendentalism), but that human nature is the totality of historically determined social relations...' Again, 'man is a process, and precisely the process of his actions...' "human nature" is a complex of human relations ...this answer includes the idea of "becoming" ...it denies "man in general" ...'

Marxism is liable to the distortion of an over-popular mechanical presentation, necessary in certain conditions but carrying dangerous implications. Gramsci was severely critical of Bukharin's *Historical Materialism* with the charge that it turned Marxism into a crude determinism.

'Marxism in fact suffered a double revision, was submitted to a double philosophical combination. On the one hand, some of its elements were absorbed... into various idealist currents' [Croce, Sorel, Bergson]; 'on the other hand, the so-called orthodox... believed they were being orthodox in identifying Marxism with traditional materialism....'

'Marxism was confronted with two tasks: to combat modern ideologies in their most refined form... and to educate the masses... whose level of culture was mediaeval... the second and basic task absorbed all its strength... the new philosophy developed in a cultural form... absolutely inadequate to overcome the ideology of the educated classes, despite the fact that the new philosophy had been expressly created to supersede the highest cultural manifestation of the period, classical German philosophy....'

'Marxism assumes this whole cultural past — the Renaissance and the Reformation, German Philosophy, the French Revolution, Calvinism and English classical political economy, lay liberalism and the historical thinking, which rests at the foundation of the whole modern conception of life. Marxism crowns the whole movement for intellectual and moral reform dialecticised in the contrast between popular and higher culture.... Marxism itself has become "prejudice" and "superstition"... but it contains within itself the principle for overcoming this.... The mutilation suffered by Hegelian thought was also inflicted on Marxism; on the one hand there has been a return to philosophical materialism and on the other, modern idealist thought has tried to incorporate into itself elements of Marxism.... Only after the creation of the State does the cultural problem pose itself in all its complexity...the attitude preceding the State can only be critical-polemical; never dogmatic, it must be romantic in attitude but with a romanticism that consciously aspires towards its own classical composition'.

Gramsci had the fairness to admit that there is some historic justification for the over-emphasis on the determinist element in popular Marxism. He wrote in prison :

'...the determinist, fatalist, mechanist element has been an immediate ideological "aroma" of Marxism, a form of religion and of stimulation (but like a drug necessitated and historically justified by the "subordinate" character of certain social strata) ...mechanical determinism becomes a formidable power of moral resistance, of patient and obstinate perseverance. "I am defeated for the moment but the nature of things is on my side over a long period".... a substitute for the predestination, providence etc. of the confessional religions.... among the masses as such, philosophy can only exist as a faith. Besides, one may well imagine the intellectual position of a man of the people...The most important element is undoubtedly of a non-rational character, of faith...in the social group.... The fact that he was once convinced, as if by a clap of thunder, is the

permanent reason for the persistence of the conviction, even if he is no longer able to argue for it'.

Yet, for Marxist theory itself, it is wrong to stop at this immediately practical level. Gramsci continued :

'But when the "subordinate" becomes the leader... mechanicalism appears at a certain moment as an imminent danger... fatalism has only been a cover by the weak for an active and real will. This is why it is always necessary to show the futility of mechanical determinism, which, explicable as a naive philosophy of the masses... becomes a cause of passivity, of imbecile self-sufficiency, when it is made into a reflexive and coherent philosophy on the part of the intellectuals...

'With regard to the historical role played by the fatalist interpretation of Marxism, one could pronounce a funeral eulogy of it, vindicating its usefulness for a certain historical period but precisely because of this urging the necessity of burying it with all honours. Its role could be linked to that of the theory of grace... which, however, culminated in the classical German philosophy with its conception of freedom as the awareness of necessity'.

Therefore, Gramsci argued ; Bukharin's 'reduction of Marxism to a sociology represents the crystallisation of the deteriorating tendencies already criticised by Engels... which consist of reducing a conception of the world into a mechanical formula, giving the impression of having the whole of history in one's pocket'. Thus,...'provisional systems are built up which do not have the necessary inner coherence but only the mechanical exterior'.

'To judge the whole philosophical past as madness and folly is not only an anti-historical error, since it contains the anachronistic pretence that in the past they should have thought like today but it is a truly genuine hangover of metaphysics, since it supposes a dogmatic thought valid at all times and in all countries, by whose standard one should judge all the past'.

Bluntly, Gramsci puts forward his view on two philosophi-

cal problems – the questions of foresight and of the materiality of the world. To quote once again :

'In reality one can foresee only the struggle and not its concrete episodes ; these might be the result of opposing forces in continuous movement, never reducible to fixed quantities.... Foresight reveals itself therefore not as a scientific act of knowledge, but as the abstract expression of the effort one makes.... The problem of the foreseeability of historical events needs to be posed correctly, so that an exhaustive criticism can be made of mechanical causation... it is absurd to think of a purely "objective" foresight. The person who has foresight in reality has a "program" that he wants to see triumph, and foresight is precisely an element of this triumph. ...reality is the result of the application of the human will to the society of things... to put aside every voluntary element and calculate only the intervention of other wills as an objective element in the general game is to mutilate reality itself.... every act of foresight presupposes the determination of regular laws of the same type as the laws of the natural sciences. But just as these laws do not exist in the absolute or mechanical sense which is supposed, so also this view takes no account of the other wills and their application is not "foreseen."... The active politician is a creator, an awakener, but he neither creates from nothing nor moves in the turbid void of his own desires and dreams. He bases himself on effective reality, but what is this effective reality ? Is it something static and immobile, or is it rather a relationship of forces in continuous movement and change of equilibrium ?... "What should be" is therefore concrete, and is moreover the only realistic and historical interpretation of reality'.

It may be said at this point that Gramsci was leaning towards free will perhaps too heavily. Does not freedom operate within, and only within, the framework of a stronger necessity ? In one passage at least, Gramsci went to the length of suggesting that we need not wait for the 'fullness of time to bring about revolution ; he stressed the creative role of the

Russian proletariat in the Bolshevik victory, minimising the favourable conditions in the situation. Can one suggest that Gramsci had not quite transcended Crocean idealism? At least, many of his comrades did feel this.

Here is Gramsci's key passage on materiality :

'Engels' formulation that "the unity of the world consists in its materiality demonstrated... by a long and labourious development of philosophy and the natural sciences" contains the very germ of the correct conception, because it appeals to history and to man in order to prove objective reality' [and not to crude common sense, a relic of the religious belief in Divine creation prior to the coming of man]....'We know reality only in its relation with man... knowledge and reality are a becoming... without thinking of the existence of man one cannot think of "thinking" '.

But Lenin in his *Materialism and Emperio-criticism* did not brush aside "crude common sense" (in the section for example—Did the Earth exist prior to Man?).... And Engels himself in his *Feuerbach* did categorically deny that Marxism was a third philosophy independent of the two great camps in which he divided all philosophy. After all, the subtle Hegelian dialectics was only the highest kind of Idealism, and Marxian praxis is basically Materialism. Gramsci was not wrong in his philosophical reflections, but it is all a question of the proper emphasis.

7

Nature of the Party

In the *Quaderni del Carcere*, the best-known portion is of course the *Modern Prince*. Many subjects are touched upon here, but undoubtedly the central theme is the nature of the Party. It has been aptly described as essays on the science of politics in the modern age.

Gramsci's interpretation of Machiavelli is perhaps one-sided and over-emphatic but quite plausible. He held that, in his *Prince*, Machiavelli wanted to persuade the revolutionary

forces in Italy of his time 'of the necessity for a "leader" ... to accept him with enthusiasm even if his actions might be or appear to be contrary to the widely-held ideology of the time, religion'. He was aiming at the 'process of formation of a determined collective will, for a determined political end'. His Prince is therefore a historical example of the Sorellian "myth", that is of 'a political ideology which is not presented as a cold utopia, or as a rational doctrine, but as a creation of concrete phantasy which works on a dispersed and pulverised people in order to arouse and organise their collective will'.

Machiavelli's amoral technique was obviously nothing new to men born into the tradition of government. He therefore must have been addressing "those who do not know", the ordinary people. Machiavelli indeed helped to improve conservative practice - but then this has happened with Marxism as well; the analysis in the *Capital* has helped the intelligent industrialist. This must not conceal Machiavelli's revolutionary approach, which indeed explains 'the whole of anti-Machiavellism'.

Today, however, 'the modern prince... cannot be a real person, a concrete individual'; the role can be played only by an 'organism... already provided by historical development...'; '...the protagonist of the new Prince in modern times cannot be an individual hero, but the political party...which...aims... to found a new type of State'.

Every party is 'the expression of a social group'; but Gramsci admits the possibility in certain conditions of the existence of several parties representing only one social group or class. Actual historical development does confirm this undogmatic proposition. Equally striking is Gramsci's formulation that even 'if no other legal parties exist, there always exist other parties either in fact or in tendency which are legally uncoercible... political questions are reclothed in cultural forms...' in such circumstances.

If the aim of the Party is to work for a new State, and if Machiavelli's Prince is followed in the task of rousing and

organising collective will, the first question is when can the conditions for the development of a national popular collective will be said to exist. The answer requires a historical-economic analysis of the social structure of the country. In Italy, the traditionally opposing forces have been the landed aristocracy and 'landed property in all its forms'; the positive factors lie in the existence of 'social groups, conveniently developed in the field of industrial production'. But the formation of the popular will is impossible 'unless the great mass of peasant-cultivators breaks *simultaneously* into political life'. History since 1815 has shown that the traditional classes try to prevent the national popular collective will, to maintain their "economico-corporative" power, the worst form of feudal society. The historic task of the Modern Prince in Italy will require therefore the overcoming of such resistance. It 'must and cannot but be the preacher and organiser of intellectual and moral reform... the program of economic reform is precisely the concrete way in which every intellectual and moral reform is presented'.

In the structure of the Party can be seen three indispensable layers or levels: the rank and file, the cadres, the leadership — the second being the necessary link between the first and the third. The leadership is of primary importance in one sense — 'it is easier to form an army than to find captains'. The task of the leadership is a heavy responsibility; 'since defeat in the struggle must always be foreseen, the preparation of its successors must be an element of equal importance with what is done for victory'. The Party integrates three things: doctrine, personnel, and the 'real historical movement'. Doctrine or ideology must not be artificially 'superimposed 'like a suit, and not like the skin which is organically produced'. The movement constantly reacts with the other two elements and causes an incessant struggle 'to raise the organism to ever more elevated and refined collective consciousness'.

Gramsci pointed out the hard truth that 'there do in fact exist rulers and ruled'. Therefore, within the Party the

leadership has a vital role. The problem is to find out how to rule in the most effective way, to know the lines of least resistance in winning the obedience of the led. But of course the question remains whether one assumes a perpetual division between leaders and followers or believes it to be only a historical fact in certain conditions. In any case it is necessary to study 'how to minimise the fact and make it disappear'.

A new State cannot be created merely by 'generous heroism and passion; the essential qualities are discipline, perseverance; coherence, and scorn for irresponsibility'. But spontaneity cannot be ignored totally; its recognition at least gives 'the mass a "theoretical" consciousness of creating historical and institutional values.' The Turin Communists, Gramsci recalled, did not scorn spontaneity – 'it was *educated*, directed, purified of everything that hindered its fusion... with modern theory'. The real political action of "subaltern" classes is the unity of spontaneity and discipline, 'since it is mass politics and not simply an adventure of groups who address themselves to the masses'.

Party discipline is 'certainly not a passive and supine acceptance of orders, a mechanical execution of assignments' (though in certain circumstances even that becomes necessary) '...but a conscious and clear understanding of the aims to be realised. Discipline in this sense does not annul individual personality' – but merely omits the wilful and irresponsible impulsiveness.

Remarkable indeed are the warnings of Gramsci against some evils in Party functioning – against arrogance, dictatorial habits, the immersion into economism, the trend of extremism – warnings which sound almost prophetic.

Party arrogance is worse than the 'national arrogance' deprecated by Vico. 'Those who...carry on a policy of arrogance are certainly to be suspected of very little seriousness'. Ode consequence is sectarianism which is 'a form of personal "patronage"... and lacks the party spirit which is the fundamental element of "public spirit"...' 'It is characteristic

of such self-deceit to belittle the adversary', and to dismiss him by neglecting 'considerations that might support his position', and this is simple demagogy.

Dictatorial habits foster the belief that 'obedience ought to be automatic, should come about without the need to show its "necessity" and "rationality", or even that it is beyond discussion.... So it is difficult to extirpate the criminal habit of neglecting to avoid useless sacrifices.... Therefore, after every defeat it is always necessary to look into the responsibility of the leaders...'. Instead of that, 'the masses... are "kept busy" with moral sermons with sentimental goods, with messianic myths of an awaited fabulous age, in which all the present contradictions and poverty will be automatically resolved and healed'. In this way, 'parties... are not always able to adapt themselves to new tasks and new periods... bureaucracy is the most dangerously habitual and conservative force; if it ends up by constituting a solid body, standing by itself and feeling independent from the masses, the party ends by becoming anachronistic...'. Democratic centralism is 'an elastic formula' after all; it lives to the extent to which it is continuously interpreted and adapted to necessity. 'The police function of a party... is regressive when it aims to repress the live forces of society and maintain a superseded anti-historic legality...'

Economism, which so often pervade a Party, was, Gramsci thought, the 'offspring of liberalism'; it had 'very little relationship with Marxism'. It is allied also to theoretical syndicalism.

Extremism which sounds so revolutionary can be linked up with mild economism, its opposite, through syndicalism. Electoral abstention of all kinds and rejection of any compromise are two familiar forms. Abstention is covered by the unrealistic slogan - "so much the worse, so much the better". Banal statements are extended to every representative system, even non-parliamentary ones. But elections do provide a necessary measure to test 'the effectiveness and ability to expand' of a Party, its capacity to persuade the people. As

for compromise so often denounced by purists in principle, the necessary process of hegemony presupposes that the interest of the groups over which it is to operate has to be 'taken account of' ; that the leading group has to make some sacrifice ; that 'a certain balance of compromises be formed' ; 'if the union of two forces is necessary to conquer the third... the only concrete possibility is compromise'. Aversion to compromise can be traced back to historical economism with its 'natural laws' and belief in 'fatalistic finalism', leaving no room for voluntaristic political initiative.

It is refreshing indeed to find such original and bold thinking on the part of a practising Marxist, a founder and the present inspirer of a major Communist Party, its topmost leader before Fascism snatched him away, a contemporary of the first Soviet triumph with its overwhelming impact. In spite of some possible gaps and flaws, the quality of the thought of Antonio Gramsci is worthy of our most serious study and is an indubitable enrichment of the arsenal of Marxism.

MILITARY ACTION IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA – A SOCIALIST CRITICISM

Victorious proletariat can force no blessing of any kind upon any foreign nation without undermining its own victory by so doing.

F. ENGELS

Bourgeois critics have always been vocal against every turn in Soviet policy throughout half a century. Socialist criticism has also been active from time to time – one will recall the Social Democratic attacks on the revolution itself in the twenties, the Trotskyite crusade against Stalinism in the thirties, the Chinese assault in the sixties against alleged Soviet ‘revisionism’. But what is really new in the current Czechoslovak crisis is undoubtedly the disagreement voiced by a large section of the communist world basically loyal to the Soviet Union and supporting the principles unfolded since the twentieth congress of the Communist Party of Soviet Union. And Marxism teaches us to recognise what is really new in any situation and to understand its implications.

Communist criticism of the recent Soviet military action in Czechoslovakia is too often dismissed by the ‘orthodox’ as ill-informed, mischievous and harmful to the cause. But R. P. Dutt, in the *Labour Monthly* of October 1968, has pertinently pointed out :

“Of the communist parties in the non-socialist world, the majority have expressed criticism. The grounds of criticism have been serious. First, that the action involved a violation of national sovereignty, the Warsaw Pact and the agreed relations between parties. Second, that it struck at the basis of relations between socialist states, since the armed forces of a socialist state had no right to enter the territory of another

Socialist state without the consent of the party and government of that state. Third, that the alleged anonymous invitation could not carry conviction, since every member of the presidium of the Czechoslovak Party, including those described by some as 'pro-Soviet', had denied participation in any invitation. Fourth, that the evidence of imminent danger of counter-revolution was insufficiently substantiated, and that in respect of the undoubted dangers of reactionary trends which did exist, and which the Czechoslovak Party had publicly recognised and warned against, it was for the Czechoslovak Party to deal with them. Fifth, if other parties considered that the Czechoslovak Party was failing to deal effectively with these dangers, this was a matter for discussion between parties, and not for the movement of troops. These were some of the weighty criticisms made by serious and experienced communist parties."

In his own opinion R. P. Dutt seems to have been noncommittal. He remarked: "In these differences between communist parties there is no umpire. Only the historical outcome, the test of practice is the final arbiter." To this, the press and publicity chief of his own party has replied: "But as parties of action, communist parties cannot wait for the verdict of history. They cannot contract out of the need to take a stand on current affairs. The action which they take helps to mould history. As Marx put it in the *Holy Family*, 'History does nothing... fights no battle. It is man, real, living man, who does everything... It is not history which requires man to realise its aims as if history were itself a person apart, for history is nothing but the activity of man pursuing his aims! Communist parties seek to ensure that history moves in a progressive direction. If they conclude that in a particular situation policies that have been carried out are incorrect, they have the duty to do everything they can to help get those policies corrected.'"

Socialist criticism of the entry of Warsaw Pact forces into Czechoslovakia runs up against a resistance in 'orthodox' communist circles, the psychology of which is interesting. Behind

the resistance there lies, apart from arguments, a naive oversimplification in the equation—criticism of any particular Soviet policy equals anti-sovietism.

It is felt that an adverse criticism of Soviet policy must automatically strengthen the enemy camp. But it is the entry itself of the Soviet and allied troops in Czechoslovak territory, and not the protest against the military action, which has brought grist to the mill of avowed enemies; intervention has revived the drooping Nato and enabled it to rally once again faltering partners like France. A protest on the basis of socialist ideals does, on the other hand, add to the prestige of socialist principles and suggest that Soviet policy on this particular issue may indeed be a temporary deviation. Demand for the correction of a specific mistake cannot dim the prospects and splendour of the socialist movement.

It is feared that criticism would inevitably weaken the camp of socialism. There was some basis for such fears when the Soviet Union was the sole socialist country, when it stood alone and helpless before the all-conquering might of Hitler, or when the atomic monopoly of the USA threatened dire ruin. Today, however, an entire socialist world has been built up, atomic parity has been attained, and the capitalist camp is visibly weakening. One can but wonder today—Is socialist society, tested for half-century, still indeed so very brittle as to collapse under the weight of the simplest criticism? It is much more likely today that healthy discussion would contribute to the well-being and advancement of the new social order, would add to its capacity for attraction.

It is said that criticism, even if justified, must not be ventilated in public. Yet Lenin taught us in *What is to be Done*, for instance, that it is the duty of the vanguard party to learn from the common masses. Socialist policy cannot be an esoteric matter left to our 'betters' and the experts. The opinion of the people is an objective factor in the assessment of any situation.

Some believe that Lenin's party must be above errors, as if

a party can always be the same. It was Lenin himself who said in 1922: "Undoubtedly, we have done, and will do in the future, an enormous number of absurd things. No one can judge or see this better than I can." The misdeeds of Stalin over two decades did occur under at least the formal auspices of Lenin's party. The assumption that such errors cannot recur after the twentieth congress runs the risk of turning into a dogma that the Soviet Party must be, now at least, immune from all mistakes. Must then the CPSU leadership be always correct in the Stalin era, in the process of destalinisation, in the subsequent retardation of that process, in the Moscow Declaration of 1960, in the polemics with China, and now in the Czech crisis? This is contrary to the Marxist dictum that there is no final authority above question, in the shape of a man, a book, an institution, or an organisation.

Some incline to the view that in cases of differences between communist parties, one must follow the Soviet lead because of the greater experience and achievements of the CPSU, that one must have 'humility'! This is against Marxist scientific understanding itself, against the Leninist tradition of principled debate, against the proclaimed canon of 'criticism and self criticism'!

Some would merely claim that in cases of difference the benefit of doubt must be given to the Soviet side. But Czechoslovakia is after all a country which has also established socialism, where a communist party with long traditions is in the seats of power, where in an experiment in widening the popular basis of the socialist system has been undertaken on the lines of ideas released by the twentieth congress. Should we deny the benefit of doubt, if the question is at all raised to the Czech people because they happen to be the weaker party? After all, unreasoning obedience is not conducive to the health and progress of any leadership with noble achievements to its credit.

Beyond a certain amount of 'orthodox' prejudice, beyond the instinctive, even elemental, loyalty to every turn of Soviet

policy, lies a volume of rational arguments advanced to justify military action in Czechoslovakia. These merit some scrutiny. I shall begin with a reference to certain recent formulation. *Pravda* has come out with the theory that there is a right of intervention in a socialist state for defence of the socialist world. There are now fourteen socialist states and the majority were not consulted in the present case of military action. Four – Yugoslavia, Romania, China, Albania – have condemned the intrusion. North Korea and Cuba have approved after the event, but the approval bristles with formulations hardly acceptable to the Soviet Union.

Czechoslovakia itself was, of course, opposed to it. Outside the socialist states, the major communist parties of Italy and France even protested beforehand against the military move. Twenty years ago, Yugoslavia was condemned as a deserter by the entire world socialist opinion; yet Stalin himself, in the heyday of his power, did not send in his troops. Intervention in Hungary in 1956, was justified by the very special circumstances – the actual coming of counter-revolution, the appeals to the west, the threatening Suez crisis, the Soviet-American tension still at its height. The Hungarian precedent therefore is not applicable today. *Pravda's* doctrine may yet prove useful to the dogmatists of Peking in a situation of their choosing.

The accepted doctrine for socialists is quite different. Here is its formulation in the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism

"Socialism proclaims genuine sovereignty and also demands its strict observance. Why? Because the building of socialism is based on the activity of the broad masses... No one can know better the requirements and potentialities of a given socialist nation than that nation itself; no one can more correctly take into consideration the specific features of its economic, political and cultural development. That is why any interference from outside, even if dictated by the best of intentions, can prove not only out of place, but even harmful to the building of socialism in a given country."

We come next to the Soviet "white book" itself, which some friends regard as fresh 'theoretical material'. It is actually a painstaking compilation of the evidence for counter-revolutionary activities and capitalist intrigues in and around Czechoslovakia. What is cited is in the main a catalogue of speeches, discussions, tendentious literature, press comments, slogans and posters, radio and television propaganda, societies and clubs, occasional demonstrations. Where censorship is lifted, a flood of such activities is sure to appear, specially after a regime of strict control. It is necessary therefore to consider how much of such outburst is ephemeral before things settle down and what is the extent of support it commands in the basic working masses of a socialist country. Where there is no rigid censorship, what must follow is a battle of ideas in which socialism is not necessarily the weaker party after an initial explosion; this must still more be the case when the economic socialist base persists. The "white book" itself contains a score and ten instances in which the Czechs themselves countered counter-revolutionary opinions. An Indian scientist, conversant with both the Czech and Russian languages, who happened to be in Prague in the crucial days, has noted that almost every expression of hostile sentiment was being answered by the Czech Party. It may also be asked as to how the decaying capitalist order has managed to survive for decades the stream of criticism directed against it. If slogans and posters, speeches, demonstrations, newspapers were indeed so efficacious, Bengal would have had a 'revolution' ere now: 'Two thousand words' or ten thousand, in the area of the superstructure, cannot wash away the economic basis of a society.

It may be added that the information culled in the Soviet "white book" is not always accurate. Czech governmental handouts have denied many of the allegations. Thus the People's Militia has claimed that much of the arms seized by the occupation forces is the militia's property taken from its storing places—"exact records exist" in its hands, it says, "of the number and types of weapons and materials confiscated";

the militia authorities are now demanding their return. The Czech Academy of Sciences has refuted other allegations ; ten basic communist units in the fields of philosophy, history, economics, sociology, expert scientific work, including the Czech Pugwash Committee, have sent in their protests against distorted charges to the Czech Party central committee. Much fuss has been made about the free flow of capitalist tourists to Czechoslovakia. It appears now from official sources that while 22 percent of the visitors this year did come from capitalist countries, the percentage of such visitors to the Soviet Union in the last available estimate was as much as 43 percent. In Czechoslovakia, the ratio of West German tourists to those from the German Democratic Republic was only 1 to 4.5. As for the secret radios, while a certain number fell into counter-revolutionary hands, very many (backed by national indignation against the foreign intrusion) did remain loyal to the Czech Party and government and scrupulously carried out their instructions. President Svoboda's historic appeal for non-resistance and patient discipline was carried by the 'illegal' radio.

One amusing inaccuracy may be nailed down in passing. Isaac Deutscher (who appears in the "white book" as 'professor' in Cambridge University) is branded as 'anti-Soviet' and a 'renegade'. Yet his *Heretics and Renegades* contains the sharpest exposure of those who, on the plea of the 'god that failed', deserted the socialist cause ; his famous review of *Dr. Zhivago* in *Ironies of History* is the most withering criticism of Pasternak's outlook ; and the *Unfinished Revolution* (pilloried here) happens to be the best academic answer to the Chinese charge that the Soviet Union has 'betrayed' socialism.

American communist leader Gus Hall's views on the Czechoslovak crisis have been widely publicised in our country. Much of his analysis is an examination of the background to the Czech crisis, which can easily be and has indeed been interpreted by others quite differently. It would unfortunately require a special article or even a pamphlet to go over the

ground again and evaluate such extensive matters like "the problems of transition" or "Czechoslovakia's lingering illness."

Busy with his 'background', Gus Hall has missed the real issue—that is, even if one admits much of the background material (by no means beyond challenge), whether this justified military intervention in flat contradiction of certain proclaimed socialist principles. He does not recognise that, after all, intervention in a country still socialist by other socialist states is an almost unprecedented event and is fraught with dangerous possibilities for the future. His quotations from Lenin refer in most cases to specifically different circumstances. Gus Hall admits the mistakes of the Novotny regime and the necessity of economic and democratic reforms in Czechoslovakia. Yet he seems unaware of the real danger in military action, that it might whittle down the Action Programme itself, which precisely was an attempt to correct the old mistakes and envisage the needed reforms. If the new mistake, as he thinks, of "concessions to the right" is a valid justification for intervention in defiance of socialist norms, would he apply this criterion to the Sino-Soviet dispute where each side accuses the other of counter-revolutionary deviation? Dangerous indeed is an over-enthusiastic claim, with a vague talk about "the reality of the surroundings and the relationship with the reality."

It is difficult to resist the temptation of a dig at Gus Hall's analogy of fire in a house with the household asleep and refusing to wake up when neighbours have a right of breaking in. Would he extend this neighbourly right to the length to arresting members of the family and staying on in the house indefinitely?

In the *Mainstream*, New Delhi weekly, Scrutator's 'Reply to Prof. Sarkar' (double the length of the original article) gives a string of different interpretations of more or less the same facts point by point. It is uncharitable to quarrel with different opinions, so long as equal publicity is given to opposed points of view. Additional facts cited by him are mere addi-

tions, not materially affecting the argument. In any case, the reader of both the article and the reply can safely be left to judge the validity of either chain of interpretations.

A few random observations on the matter in the 'Reply' will not however be out of place. Scrutator holds that what I called our "mass indifference" is explained by "the widespread attachment" in this country to the Soviet Union ; in that case he and his friends need not have been disturbed over any effects of my article. Scrutator goes out of the way by quoting the paragraph in the statement of some Calcutta intellectuals and dubs them as "anti-Soviet". He left out carefully the immediately preceding and succeeding paragraphs which effectively refute the charge that they think that the working class power has to be "defeated and is not worth defending". Scrutator refers to Bismarck's alleged famous remark that "Bohemia held the key to Europe" ; he forgets that Bismarck, after over-running Bohemia (the Czech country) in 1866, promptly restored it to Austria which was not even his ally for years to come, and that the "key" remained in Austria's hands for centuries without much appreciable effect on the European balance. About the five types of justification I examined, Scrutator comments that "none of these could have on its own brought about a situation demanding military intervention", yet taken together they would justify military action ; that is, five arguments, each weak, would collectively become adequate ! Scrutator is wrong in asserting that "the overwhelming majority in the world communist movement has come out in support of the Soviet stand", a statement manifestly wrong ; according to R. P. Dutt, a majority of non-ruling communist parties (including the biggest two) have expressed criticism ; in addition, the four condemning ruling parties include the giant membership of China. At least half a dozen of the supporting parties, again, apparently do not approve the arguments in the stand of the Warsaw Pact leadership.

The concrete arguments justifying military action in Czechoslovakia run mainly on two inter-connected lines - the fear

of capitalist attack and the danger of internal counter-revolution. I have examined these arguments in detail elsewhere. Here it will be enough to recapitulate a few points.

First the external threat. There has been much talk of an imminent West German assault. The Warsaw Pact forces are however available in considerable strength on three sides of Czechoslovakia. They could have moved in as soon as the West Germans crossed the borders and could have pushed the enemy out of initial gains. That would not have added to the prospect of a general war, for the military action actually taken also ran the same risk. Waiting for an actual enemy invasion (which might not even have materialised) was certainly not the riskier course. But waiting would have rallied the support of all socialist and democratic opinion and ensured Czech national co-operation. In a modern war, popular enthusiasm and participation must be an invaluable asset.

Behind West Germany looms the American menace. If the USA did intervene (there was no certainty of this again), the result would have been a world war, inevitably leading to air warfare in the main. In such a case, the strategic value of the Czech country itself must have dwindled to insignificance. It is however quite possible that the USA would avoid such confrontation. The Americans lack Hitler's overwhelming strength, his desperate urge for new territory ; their hands are full with 'preventive' operations. Today, 'cold war' is the norm, rather than any deliberate rush towards atomic clash. The obvious Soviet-American anxiety for a 'detente' to avoid a world war is an objective factor today.

Some supporters of the military action talk in terms of 'strategic frontiers', balance of power, spheres of influence, preventive operations. Such a return to the discredited language of old diplomacy, courageously discredited by Lenin in days of much greater peril, is hardly worthy of socialism.

Recent Soviet publicity confirms the suspicion that, not the possibility of western invasion, but the fear of a 'quiet coun-

ter-revolution' was the driving force behind the military march-in.

There is no doubt that counter-revolutionary trends have recently raised their heads in Czechoslovakia ; the Czech Party has admitted this. One has to ask, however, the reason for such popularity of reaction in a socialist land. Obviously discontent with near-stalinist rule in recent years has fomented this unrest, and the Action Programme aimed exactly at weaning the people away from it. Forcible occupation may easily enough push the country back towards the old discredited policies and hinder the new perspective of popularisation of socialism itself.

Unasked intervention offends national sentiment, thereby adding to the difficulties ahead. Unwanted interference from abroad does not help the struggling forces building up socialism in a country ; the revolution depends on rousing the enthusiasm of the working masses within, it cannot be imported on the barrels of guns. Foreign occupation drives wounded national feelings to seek succour from external sources, quite possibly from bourgeois quarters in the present case, and this will defeat the very purpose of the intervention. Freedom of expression on the other hand enables a government to feel the pulse of the people and take necessary steps in time to allay genuine discontent. If 'counter-revolution' in Czechoslovakia melts away with the coming of troops, its strength must have been over-rated ; if it merely persists underground waiting for future opportunities, the occupation will have to be prolonged indefinitely.

The argument that some Czech leaders called in the Warsaw Pact forces remains unconvincing. They have not come out into the open to face their people with the courage of a Kadar. If they now build up, under Soviet patronage, a grip over the Czech Party, that will not endear them to the people and a bleak future would await them. The contention that the Czech Party was too weak in the immediate past to shoulder its proper responsibility points to a possible attempt

now to reconstitute the leadership and revise its programme under allied pressure. From the days of the Comintern such experiments have hardly been happy.

It appears that the Soviet authorities were deeply alarmed at the prospect of the end of censorship. But socialist censorship was characterised by Lenin at its inception as a regrettable temporary expedient. Whether it still remains necessary in a country must be decided by the national leadership, not dictated by external intervention. Dictatorship exists in every state, but the conditions in different lands are not the same. Proletarian dictatorship cannot therefore be coterminus with prolonged censorship. Obviously, socialist revolution will not take the same form everywhere; the *Pravda* argument therefore that the different models must follow the general features of the Soviet experience is untenable. It may be recalled that the triumph of the bourgeois revolution all over the world did not have to tread the specific footsteps of its great French prototype. In this sense, history does not repeat itself.

Were there for the harassed Warsaw Pact leaders any other ways to deal with the Czech situation, short of the uninvited, unpopular intervention? I would suggest, in all humility, certain alternative policies which were open to them.

1. The Soviet Union might have warned publicly that any western invasion of Czechoslovakia would immediately be answered by a counter-intervention. In the present international situation this was most likely to restrain West German and American intrigues. It would have at the same time commanded the support of the entire world socialist opinion.

2. The Soviet Government could have publicly assured Czechoslovakia that troops would be sent in for friendly aid as soon as the Czech authorities asked for it. This would have reassured the Czech socialist order without infringing national sovereignty.

3. The Soviet leadership might have openly announced beforehand that they would come to the rescue of the estab-

lished socialist regime in Czechoslovakia, as soon as any armed counter-revolution breaks out there. That would have enlisted Czech popular enthusiasm lacking today.

4. The Soviet authorities might have brought to the notice of the Czech leadership, day after day, all the instances they could collect of counter-revolutionary intrigues and activities. It would have placed the responsibility of tackling such danger squarely on the shoulders of the ruling Czech leaders themselves

5. If it was felt that the Czech authorities were incapable or unwilling to control the situation, the matter might have been brought to the bar of the international socialist movement. Moral pressure could in this way have been exercised over the recalcitrant Czech Party and the people could thereby be awakened up.

The Moscow Agreement, after the unfortunate intervention, could only be making the best of a bad business. It does not allay the misgiving that the event itself, armed intrusion, was very likely unnecessary and most probably shortsighted. There is hardly any merit in forcing the Czech Party to mend its ways under military pressure now, leaving wide open the real ultimate problem of convincing an advanced people.

A divergence of outlook seems to be emerging between the supporters of the military action in Czechoslovakia and its socialist critics, a divergence which has to be thrashed out in principle in the interests of Marxism itself within the framework of Marxist understanding. The current trend in Soviet policy threatens to converge towards the hard-headed line of the Peking dogmatists. Yet the polemics against China persists, a struggle which must be conducted on ideological grounds, and not allowed to degenerate into a national clash between two great powers. Soviet supporters reiterate their faith in the twentieth congress, of course, but something more is needed than verbal adherence.

The socialist critics of the recent military action (barring China and Albania) take their stand on the twentieth congress,

the perspective opened by which was confirmed in subsequent solemn documents. This has been called the 'new horizons' of Marxism and aims alike at the renewal of effective class struggle and communism in the non-communist countries and the fulfilment of socialism's promise in the world under communist rule. This includes principles like national sovereignty, peaceful settlement of international disputes, autonomy and equality of the fraternal parties, the possibility in certain cases of a peaceful transition to socialism, different roads to socialism, democratisation of socialist administration. And all this by no means a 'revision' of Marx, but an application of his teaching in today's concrete circumstances.

The end of economic exploitation is central to Marx's thought. But he connected it with the liberation of the human personality, "the development of human energy which is an end in itself." Marx defined his theory as "the doctrine that man is the highest being for man ; i.e. the categorical imperative to overthrow all conditions in which man is a humiliated, enslaved, despised and rejected being." John Lewis has highlighted this humanism in his recent biography of Marx. Dr. Shiskin has elaborated this teaching in the Soviet *Voprosy Filozofii*, No. 10, 1967.

The end of alienation requires basically economic liberation. But it also involves the removal of other obstacles like state bureaucracy and regimentation in the communist order. Marx wrote : "Bureaucracy regards itself at the be-all and the end-all of the state... the all-pervading universal spirit of bureaucracy is *mystery*, secrecy. Worship of authority is its *way of thinking*." He added : "There is only one remedy for all these intrigues but it is a very radical remedy, full publicity." "What a fine example of regimented communism !", he observed in 1873 in relation to the sectarianism of his day. In the *World Marxist Review*, No. 5, 1963, Y. Karyakin applied this approach to the "regimented communism (especially in our time)", with a direct reference to Stalin, in the section "Marxist tradition of struggle against Regimented Communism". Soviet com-

munism is thus not always necessarily free from this evil which can be overcome by the rich thought of Marx himself.

Revolution is truly achieved by the masses. Marx observed : "I call revolution the conversion of all hearts and the raising of all hands in behalf of the honour of the free man." Here, 'all' cannot mean literally everyone, but certainly implies immense masses of people, whom class-struggle sets in motion in a country, we have to be won over to socialism. Revolution cannot therefore be imposed from outside - "the victorious proletariat", said Engels, "can force no blessings upon any foreign nation without undermining its own victory."

Proletarian internationalism can easily be distorted as a slogan. Lenin spoke about "the ridiculous assertion that we should conceal every concrete difficulty of the revolution with the declaration that, 'I am counting on the trump-card of the international and socialist movement so that I can commit any folly I like'."

Lenin warned against the possibility of mistake by a proletarian government, in 1916, even before the revolution : "Just because the proletariat has carried out a social revolution, it will not become holy and immune from errors and weaknesses."

Such fundamentals are well-known in the Soviet Union. That is the basis of our hope and faith that it will quickly rectify a 'tragic error' and immediately withdraw all troops from Czechoslovakia and refuse to countenance external pressure against the Czech party. And this will be the finest tribute to the founder of our movement on his 150th birth anniversary.

MARX AND MAN : A CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF IDEAS

Introduction

As a mere student of history, I shall confine myself to a historical and logical presentation of some of the ideas of Marx and Engels, drawing heavily from their own writings, with occasional comments of my own.¹

Certain difficulties face us at the outset.

Firstly, Marx was a philosopher, a sociologist, a historian, an economist, and a political revolutionary, all in one. It is of course possible to extract one aspect of his thought, philosophy for example, treating it as an 'isolate' in the words of Professor Levi. But this leads to the danger of a partial incomplete understanding, of which one must always be conscious.

Secondly, Marx and Engels, throughout their lives, waged polemical struggles, neglecting the building of any system, from the *Holy-Family* (1845) and even before to the *Anti-Duhring* (1878) and beyond. They fought against mystic idealists and mechanical materialists, against orthodox economists and utopian socialists, against militant anarchists and 'respectable' reformists, and so on. But this naturally led to the danger of over-emphasis in demolishing the particular enemy, which can be corrected only by keeping in view the entire corpus of their thought.

Thirdly, there is sometimes the assumption that we have a contradiction between the early and the later Marx. As it happens, in our present discussion, the opinions of the young Marx in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* of 1844 and the *German Ideology* of 1845-47 figure very prominently. Are

these formulations mere youthful speculation which Marx himself outgrew and abandoned ?

Disillusioned socialists and philosophical idealists have in recent years largely seized upon the early writings, unpublished for so many years, to discredit familiar Marxism. Some even seem to imply that Marx ceased creative thinking by the mid-forties of the last century. On the other hand, many practising Marxists, weighed down by concrete political pre-occupations, incline to think that these writings were immature and were justly allowed so long to remain in manuscript form ; they would like to turn their back on the problem of the individual Marx's earlier thought. I think both these approaches are incorrect.

The non-publication of some of the manuscripts by Marx should not be unduly stressed. *The Jewish Question* and the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction* were actually published in 1844 ; the *Holy Family* in 1845. It was only 'altered circumstances' (the approach of revolutionary crisis), after all, which prevented the coming out of the *German Ideology* which had been sent to the printers.² Then followed hard days, exile, a multitude of tasks. The delay in publication after the death of Marx and Engels must be attributed to the apathy of German Social Democracy, to the grave difficulties in the early years of Bolshevik rule, and finally to the interruption in the work of the Marx-Engels Institute after Riazonov.

Marx also had no limit to self-criticism and often enough kept his writings in Manuscript, for future polishing ; the history of the *Grundrisse* of 1857-58 and Engels' complaint at the delay in the completion of even the *Capital* testify to the fact that even in his maturity Marx was not over-eager to publish.

Marx had the habit of writing down and preserving an enormous mass of notes, out of which could be shaped at suitable moments finished works. The *Critique of Political Economy* and the *Capital* arose out of the notes in this way.

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Marx intended to the last the production of a philosophical treatise, mainly on the later Greek philosophies of "self-consciousness", among other projects. A harsh care-worn life, urgent economic analyses and historical studies, day-to-day political activity, finally ill-health prevented the fulfilment of such plans. That does not take away the value of manuscript notes to which we have now access.

It is true that Marx and Engels were no dogmatists, and they modified their views whenever they felt the need. The successive historical stages in social evolution, presented in the *German Ideology* and the *Communist Manifesto* in the forties of the last century, appear differently in the *Formen* and the *Critique of Political Economy* a decade later; further re-thinking on the subject can be detected in the seventies. In the Preface of 1872, the authors tell us that the *Communist Manifesto* had grown out of date here and there.³ Engels admitted even later that 'our knowledge of economic history' was incomplete and that 'economic history is steel in its cradle'.⁴ The theory about the relationship of the superstructure to the basis was restated in successive clarifications.⁵ And political tactics were necessarily changed with changing situations.⁶

But such modifications are only in the detailed application of the basic theory, quite natural in a scientific way of thinking. The fundamentals of the Marxian outlook, on the other hand, seem to have remained unaltered since the middle or even the early 1840's, though of course there is an evolution in expression and analysis. Thus the 'alienation' in the *Jewish Question* (1844) and the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (1844) is not substantially different from the 'fetishism' in the *Capital* of 1867 (Vol. I, ch. I, sec.4); alienation is confirmed again by Engels' concept of the State in his *Origins* (1884); the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, 1875, also fits in with this approach. Again, it is undoubtedly the hypothesis in the *German Ideology* (1845-47) which appears in specific historical

studies like the *Eighteenth Brumaire* (1852); is summed up in the *Critique* of 1859; and is placed concretely in relation to capitalist society in the *Capital* from 1867 on.

We are justified in asserting therefore a self-consistent continuity in the evolution of Marx's thought, instead of contraposing a young idealistic Marx to an older Marx with hardened heart.

2

A Philosophy in Formation

It was at Paris in 1844 that what Lenin described as the three source of Marxism first flowed together—German philosophy, English economics, and French socialism. The years before 1844 were thus the formative years which laid down the foundations of what became the distinctive world-outlook of Marx.

Engels much later told A. M. Voden that Marx was never a Hegelian.⁷ Marx was entered at the Berlin University in 1836 as a student of law, not philosophy, though he read up philosophy among other subjects in his own way. Hegel's posthumous influence at Berlin was however too great to be escaped. What attracted the youthful Marx was the Hegelian dialectic method, and not the abstract system.

In a letter to his father (November 10, 1837), Marx described the Hegelian system as a 'false siren' adding that its reconciliation of Reality with the Idea was unacceptable.⁸ In his doctoral *Dissertation* (1841), Marx sharply rejected Hegel's serene dismissal of the later Greek philosophy of self-consciousness.

For the Hegelian dialectic, on the other hand, Marx and Engels cherished great respect till the end. In the 1873 Preface to *Capital* Marx protested against the current German tendency to treat Hegel as a 'dead dog'; asserted that for this reason he avowed himself as 'the pupil of that mighty thinker'; and he did use in his masterpiece Hegel's

'mode of expression'. Engels, on his part in his letter to Schmidt (October 27, 1890), ridiculed superficial Marxists with the acid comment: 'What these gentlemen all lack is dialectic.... Hegel has never existed for them....'

At the same time, Marx did not forget to point out his disagreement with the 'mystifying side of Hegelian dialectic' which has to be 'turned right side up' to discover 'the rational kernel within the mystical shell'. (1873 Preface to the *Capital*). And Marx as early as 1847, in his *Poverty of Philosophy*, laughed at Prudhon's use of the so-called Hegelian triad, though Plekhanov has pointed out that the triad did not play any very crucial part in Hegel's own argument⁹; Lenin tells us that in a letter to Engels on January 8, 1868 Marx expressed again his contempt for 'wooden trichotomies'.¹⁰

Not Hegel alone, but pre-Hegelian German philosophy as well left its mark on Marx. In the 1837 letter to his father mentioned above, Marx almost equated idealism with Kant and Fichte, and Engels acknowledged the debt decades afterwards.¹¹ Kant's humanism and autonomy of the human spirit appealed to the young men, while Fichte's primacy of action and stress on practice became a veritable part of the Marxian heritage, though these still remained on the abstract mental plane, external to concrete social history. Fichte taught that man not merely comprehends things but realises himself in willing and working. This conception of the activity of the individual mind must have had a considerable influence on Marx's approach to man. The latest biographers understandably emphasise the role of Fichte in the making of the philosophical outlook of Marx.¹²

The young Marx was moved also by another philosophical trend—the later Greek philosophy of self-consciousness, which had aimed at widening the horizons of man beyond the intellectual limitations of Hellenism and the social limitations of slavery, and which carried a message

of inner individual freedom as a reaction against a demoralised age. "The doubts of the Sceptics, the hatred the Epicureans bore towards religion, and the republican sentiments of the Stoics"¹³ all pointed in this direction. It is significant that Marx chose the Epicurean philosophy as the subject of his doctoral thesis. He was moved in this work by a vision of human liberation. In his *Preparatory Notes* (1839-41) we read: 'we are liberated from that philosophy which, as a fixed system, has burdened us with chains'.¹⁴ The ideal of Prometheus, the legendary liberator of man, is extolled, with his proud assertion: "I harbour hate against all the gods", with his famous retort to the messenger from Olympus: "For your vile slavery, be assured, never would I change my own unhappy lot."¹⁵

Indeed, this rather 'unphilosophical' attitude of revolt characterised young Marx from the beginning. He imbibed from his father a love for the French Revolution, a respect for St Simon from his future father-in-law and from Gans, his teacher. 'With contempt, I will fling my gauntlet in the world's face', he wrote to his fiancée.¹⁶ This was not mere youthful bravado. The Young Hegelians shared with him the admiration for the Greek Philosophy of self-consciousness, but Marx broke away from them with the argument that human emancipation cannot be simply religious, emancipation must be social and political as well.

Even in the formative years, thus, Marx was drawn into practical social activity. Working in the *Rheinische Zeitung* (1842) after graduation, he quickly realised that deputies in legislatures pursue specific class-interests, that the law was an instrument of private interests. He was learning, in his own words, 'to consider the state with the eyes of man', to turn away from theology, just as Copernicus, he said, had done in the field of astronomy.¹⁷ Marx demanded freedom of the press, defended the oppressed masses, expressed fierce anger against injustice. Criticising Hegel in 1843, he

held that it was the material forces in civil society, and nothing else, which give rise to the State, an organ necessarily of class interests, and therefore not above our criticism. The 1843 *Notebooks* studied Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and even Hamilton.¹⁸ The *Year-Book* of 1844 gave the call 'to criticise the existing world ruthlessly'.

The pull towards materialism was not for Marx mainly a later development, in spite of all the weight of the idealist philosophy in the Germany of his youth. Indeed, his turning away from religion, which is integral to the idealist attitude, was early enough. 'I went on from idealism.... to search for the Idea in reality itself,' he wrote to his father as early as 1837 in the letter indicated above. '... the quest for an *alien* being, a being above man and nature.... becomes impossible in practice'.¹⁹ Such an attitude must have prevented him from swallowing the essence of the philosophical idealism around him. Thus he easily gravitated towards the materialist line. In the *Dissertation* (1841), we find him quite at home with the materialism of Democritus and the anti-religion of Epicurus. It was Feuerbach who dispelled for him finally the mists of idealism. Marx in 1844 wrote: 'Feuerbach's great achievement is.... the establishment of *true materialism*....'²⁰ In 1842 Feuerbach had proclaimed: "Thought arises from being and not being from thought."

It was also easy to link the materialist philosophic approach with the social struggle which was already claiming Marx as its own. A few passages will illuminate this link-up.

1844— 'Revolutions need a *passive* basis, a material basis. Theory is realised in a people so far as it fulfills the needs of the people.'²¹

1845— 'The idea always came to grief, in so far as it was distinct from interest.'²² '... necessarily materialism is connected with communism.'²³

1846— 'It is the old illusion that changing existing condi-

tions depends only on the good will of people, and that existing conditions consist of ideas.... ideologists.... inevitably put the thing upside down and regard their ideology as the creative force and as the aim of all social relations, whereas it is only an expression and symptom of these relations.'²⁴

Yet Feuerbach's materialism was static and what Marx needed was a theory of activity. Already, in his *Dissertation*, Marx had criticised Democritus exactly for this lack of an 'energizing principle'. Naturally therefore he now pushed further ahead and invoked the principle of human activity, already familiar to him, to correct the inertness in Feuerbach. This was summed up for the purpose of 'self-clarification' in the *Eleven Theses on Feuerbach* (1845).

The existing materialism conceived reality only 'in the form of the *object* or of *contemplation*,' not as '*human sensuous activity, practice*.' (Thesis 1). The materialist doctrine 'forgets that it is men who change circumstances' (Thesis 3). At the same time, 'the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations.' (Thesis 6). Therefore, 'the abstract individual' 'belongs in reality to a particular form of society.' (Thesis 7). And finally, the proper task of philosophy is, not interpreting, but changing the world.²⁵ (Thesis 11).

The standpoint in the *Eleven Thesis* is anticipated in 1844: 'Material force can only be overthrown by material force; but theory itself becomes a material force when it has seized the masses'.²⁶ And this philosophy is linked with the class-struggle. 'Just as philosophy finds its *material* weapons in the proletariat, so the proletariat finds its *intellectual* weapons in philosophy.'²⁷

The philosophy of Marx had thus reached a definitive form—dynamic materialism; the recognition of a dialectic activity of struggle within the materialist process; the redirective activity of man on a material reality; the possibility of freedom of action within the framework of

material necessity. Therefore, Marx could say : 'Men make their own history, but they do not make it.... under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past.'²⁸

Was this a third philosophy, distinct alike from idealism and materialism ? In one passage in 1844, Marx did say : 'Consistant naturalism or humanism distinguishes itself from both idealism and materialism constituting at the same time the unifying truth of both.'²⁹ But this is overborne by many other statements, for instance : '...the priority of external nature remains unassailed...'³⁰ ; '...thinking by which the concrete is grasped.... is by no means, however, the process which itself generates the concrete.'³¹ Garaudy adds pertinently that though the object cannot be known without a subject, it is an absurdity to say that the former cannot exist without the latter.³² All common sense, including that of the professional philosophers, have to accept this in practice every day. And this is materialism.

What Marx criticised in the 1845 *Theses* is only 'all hitherto existing materialism.' A new materialism was therefore possible, and Marx advanced it. There is thus no difficulty in agreeing with Engels that the 'basic question of all philosophy.... is that concerning the relation of thinking and being....' and that the answers that philosophers give to this question 'split them into two great camps'.³³ Judged by this standard, Marx with his conviction that nature, matter was primary, not consciousness, was indubitably a materialist, albeit of a new kind.

3

The Question of Alienation

The formation-process of Marx's philosophy itself would suggest that the individual could not very well have been ignored by him. Materialist as distinct from supra-human mystic) dialectics, the stress on man's activity and practice, the Promethean vision of liberation of man, the political

struggle against oppression, the aim of changing the world—all pointed to the role of the individual. But a distinctive note in Marx's thought, even in the early 1840's, was that man is not an abstract isolated being, but is indissolubly bound up with the concrete reality of the socio-economic relations in which he finds himself; the bondage or liberation of the individual cannot therefore be separated from the historic development of the particular society to which he belongs. Marx's entire handling of the problem of alienation lights up this approach.

Alienation was a familiar concept in the philosophic world round young Marx. In Hegelian idealism, the material world is an alienation from the soul. Feuerbach regarded man's projection of his own being beyond himself into a transcendent God as the essence of alienation. Alienation can thus be defined as regarding what was man's own work as a reality exterior to and superior over himself.³⁴ The term may be applied in secular life when a man projects a part of himself into something which passes beyond his control: the state turns into an organ of coercion, administration into a bureaucracy, political associations into authoritarian entities—and yet all of these are human creations.

Marx summed up his general stand on the question of alienation in the following words: '... as long as a cleavage exists between the particular and the common interest, as long therefore as activity is not voluntarily, but naturally divided, man's own act becomes an alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him.'³⁵ The primitive man on the other hand, free of such cleavages, feels in his world 'as much at home as a *fish* in water.'³⁶ Marx thought that the root of alienation lay not in the nature of man, nor in his ideas, but in the concrete conditions of social life. The corollary follows that, by changing social life in an appropriate way, man can overcome alienation.

Following Feuerbach, Marx dealt with the religious form of alienation. The phrase about the 'opium of the people' is oft-quoted and misunderstood ; but the whole passage conveys not superior contempt or reproach, but deep understanding and sympathy :

'... This state, this society, produce religion which is an *inverted world consciousness*, because they are an *inverted world*. Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual *point d'honneur*, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, its general basis of consolation and justification.... The struggle against religion is, therefore, indirectly a struggle against *that world* whose spiritual *aroma* is religion. *Religious* suffering is at the same time an *expression* of real suffering and a *protest* against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people. The abolition of religion as the *illusory* happiness of men, is a demand for their *real* happiness.... The criticism of religion is therefore *the embryonic criticism of this vale of tears* of which religion is the *halo*.'

Marx added that the '*task of philosophy* which is in the service of history, is to unmask human self-alienation in its *secular form*.... Thus the criticism of heaven is transformed into the criticism of earth, the *criticism of law*, and the *criticism of theology* into the *criticism of politics*.'³⁷

As *Capital I*, stated almost quarter-century later : 'The religious reflection of the real world can, in any case, finally vanish when the practical relations of everyday life offer to man none but perfectly intelligible and reasonable relations to his fellow-men and Nature.'³⁸

Incidentally, it follows that Marx had no great faith in the crusade of atheism as such, against religion, neglecting the necessary preliminary struggle for a social revolution. That is like putting the cart before the horse. And this is what Feuerbach missed.

From religious alienation, Marx passed to the political, and then to the economic. Speaking about the State, he said: 'What prevails in the so-called Christian state is not man but alienation.... Political emancipation is at the same time the *dissolution* of the old society, upon which the sovereign power, the alienated political life of the people, rests.... Human emancipation will only be complete when the real, individual man.... has recognized and organized his own powers as *social* powers so that he no longer separates this social power from himself as *political* power.'³⁹ This is substantially the same idea as the later concept of the withering away of the State which Marx and Engels held up in their maturity.

But of course, the alienation of the individual which most concerned Marx was the economic alienation, and his most distinctive thinking refers to this. His famous formulation is about alienated or estranged labour which political economy describes without understanding, and which has to be ended to liberate individual man.

The object produced by labour, labour's product, is called by Marx an objectification of labour. When man produces something for his own self or for his circle, there is human fulfilment, an objectification that is not yet alienation. But when labour is forced labour of some kind imposed from the outside, economic alienation begins. With rigid division of labour and the emergence of class-society when the owners hold down the toilers to extract a surplus by pressure, alienation takes shape. 'Private property in the means of production is the driving force behind this process of alienation, and this reaches its climax under capitalist commodity production. 'Misery therefore, emerges spontaneously out of the essence of present-day labour.'⁴⁰ Marx is thus linking up the individual man with his social conditions. And he was not exactly indulging in abstract speculation: 'my results have', he said, 'been won by means of a wholly empirical analysis based on a conscientious

critical study of political economy.⁴¹ Indeed, the *Manuscripts* of 1844 which new admirers of Marx extol so much for the humanity were very largely economic studies on class-exploitation.

Marx dwelt upon various aspects of estranged or alienated labour under capitalism after the 'critical study' in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* of 1844.

Firstly, '.... labour's product— confronts it as *something alien*, as a *power independent* of the producer,.... this realisation of labour appears as *loss of reality* for the workers ; objectification as *loss of the object* and *object-bondage* ; appropriation as *estrangement*, as *alienation*.' Again, '.... labour produces for the rich wonderful things.... but for the worker it produces privation. It produces palaces.... but for the worker, hovels. It produces beauty....but for the worker, deformity.... It produces intelligence— but for the worker idiocy, cretinism.'⁴²

Secondly, '.... the estrangement is manifested not only in the result but in the *act of production*— within the *producing activity* itself.' Thus, '....labour is *external* to the worker,.... in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind.... His labour is therefore not voluntary, but coerced ; it is *forced labour*....the worker's activity.... belongs to another ; it is the loss of his self.'⁴³

'Conscious life-activity directly distinguishes man from animal life-activity.... Man produces even when he is free from physical need and only truly produces in freedom therefrom'. Marx called this 'species-being' for man and said : 'It is just in the working-up of the objective world.... that man first really proves himself to be a *species-being*'. The third aspect of estranged labour turns on this. 'In tearing away from man the object of his production, therefore, estranged labour tears from him his *species-life*....'⁴⁴

It may be added that in this way, man is divorced from free conscious purposive activity worthy of man; he loses the sense of belonging to his community; he becomes a prey to pessimism, indifference, and helplessness even in the midst of technical triumphs.

On page 117 of the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 1844, Marx summed up the result of the triple alienation thus: 'A dwelling in the *light*, which Prometheus in Aeschylus designated as one of the greatest boons, by means of which he made the savage into a human being, ceases to exist for the worker.'

Alienation of the individual from his labour-product, from the labour-process, and from true species-life, has consequences which constitute yet other aspects of the phenomenon. Thus we have 'the *estrangement of man from man....* of a man's relation to the other man....'⁴⁵ The estrangement from species-life must mean this separation.

Further, the question may be posed: 'If the product of labour is alien to me,...to whom, then, does it belong? If my own activity does not belong to me,—to whom, then does belong?'⁴⁶ The answer obviously is '....it belongs to some *other man than the worker....* Not the gods, not nature but only man himself can be this alien power over man'.⁴⁷ The worker 'begets the dominion of the one who does not produce over production and the product.'⁴⁸ Now, the owner, the exploiter, the capitalist also cannot escape the effect of alienation, and is 'under the sway of inhuman power' which reduces his own self to an 'empty being'.⁴⁹ 'Private property has made us', commented Marx, 'so stupid and one-sided that an object in only *ours* when we have it.'⁵⁰ The result is that we become incapable of enjoying the beauty around us.

Marx also pointed out that the whole system of alienation is connected with the system of money. 'The god of *practical need and self-interest* is *money....* Money is the alienated

essence of man's work and existence ; this essence dominates him and he worships it.'⁵¹

The mature Marx was neck-deep in economic and historical study, in practical political activities. He had little time thus for philosophical argument. But *Capital I* (1867) proves conclusively that at the height of his life's work he had not discarded the early idea of alienation, of estranged labour in class-society. Thus :

'The life-process of society, i.e. the process of material production, will not shed its mystical veil until it becomes the product of freely associated men.'

'To find an analogy, we must have recourse to the nebulous regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and with the human race. So it is the same in the world of commodities, with the products of men's hands. This I call the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, as soon as they are produced as commodities.'

'Just as in the sphere of religion man is dominated by the creatures of his own brain, so in sphere of capitalist production, he is dominated by the creature of his own hand.'

'The exercise of labour-power, labour, is the worker's own life-activity.... it is rather the sacrifice of his life.'

Capitalist methods, *Capital I* tells us further, 'mutilate the worker into a fragment of a human being.... estrange him from the intellectual potentialities of the labour-process.'

It is also permissible to point out that the depiction in the *Capital* of the inhumanity in capitalism and even in certain pre-capitalist societies is essentially the same as in the treatment by Marx of estranged labour in 1844. In Marx's presentation, the philosophic concept of alienation does indeed lose its abstract nature and comes to life in the concrete social relations of man. Here also Marx puts

an old conception right side up, revealing its rational kernel.

In such a context, transcending alienation could no longer be considered as the affair of the solitary philosopher, the pure effort of self-consciousness. Alienation could be overcome, Marx held, only by ending through collective effort the conditions which bred it, that is by social revolution through class-struggle. The task of philosophy is to be taken over by the proletariat. 'The positive abolition of *private property*, as the appropriation of human life, is *thus the positive* abolition of all alienation, and thus the return of man from religion, the family, the State, etc. to his *human, i.e. social* life.'⁵²

There arises at this point the pertinent question—is socialism then necessarily the overcoming of all alienations in social life? The passage quoted just above does say that the 'abolition of private property' (in the means of production, of course) is the 'abolition of all alienation', and recent Soviet writing has inclined to the view that socialist society is, as a matter of course, free from alienation. Yet we have to remember that Marx himself in the *Critique of the Gotha Program* (1875) categorically distinguished an early stage—namely socialism proper—from the later developed stage of genuine communism. It is idle to claim that this second stage has been yet attained by any socialist society in our experience.

Socialist societies which have arisen so far all belong to Marx's first stage; they have abolished private property in the means of production. Now this of course is the first essential step in overcoming alienation. Still, this does not automatically eliminate all alienation. Commodity production, not to mention rigid division of labour, money, the state, administrative bureaucracy, religion—all have been regarded by Marx as alienations, and they still remain in a socialist society as we know it. Apparently, these have to wither away under full-fledged communism visualised

as the later stage of development by the *Critique* of 1875, before alienation can be finally overcome. And the process of withering away of such remnants cannot be just automatic, if dialectical development through struggle, an absolute in Marxist philosophy, continues to operate even after the advent of socialism. The self complacency in certain socialist circles, the belief in automatism, is without doubt un-Marxist.

4

Marx's Humanism

Humanism in a broad sense is a very long tradition in man's history. But often enough it has been incomplete and inconsistent, not covering all men, one part of the ideal contradicting another. Only too often also, it has been a utopian vision. In theory, Marxism claims to be the most complete and the most consistent form of humanism, one that is also realisable in history through the operation of material social forces in evolution, and not dependent solely on individual good will.

Marx pointed out the inadequacy of abstract (spiritual or pure) humanism. 'Real Humanism', he said, 'has no more dangerous enemy.... than *spiritualism* or *speculative idealism* which substitutes "*self-consciousness*" or the "*spirit*" for the *real individual man*....'⁵³ And: 'Individuals have always built on themselves, but naturally on themselves within their given historical conditions and relationships, not on the "pure" individual in the sense of the ideologists.'⁵⁴

'The criticism of religion', declared Marx, 'ends with the doctrine that *man is the supreme being for man*. It ends, therefore, with the *categorical imperative to overthrow all those conditions in which man is an abased, enslaved, abandoned, contemptible being*....'⁵⁵

Speaking of his own country, Marx went on in the same essay: '... once the lightning of thought has penetrated

deeply into the virgin soil of the people, the Germans will emancipate themselves and become men.... The emancipation of Germany is only possible *in practice* if one adopts the point of view of that theory according to which man is the highest being for man.⁵⁶

Elsewhere, Marx expressed his belief thus : 'Communism is the positive abolition of *private property*, of *human self-alienation*, and thus the real *appropriation* of *human nature* through and for man. It is therefore, the return of man himself as a *social*, i.e. really human being, a complete and conscious return which assimilates all the wealth of previous development.'⁵⁷

Also : 'Human emancipation will only be complete when the real, individual man has absorbed into himself the abstract citizen ; when as an individual man, in his everyday life, in his work, and in his relationships, he has become a *species-being*.'⁵⁸

In short, 'Communism.... is humanism,' Marx claimed.⁵⁹

This stress on man, this value for the individual, is denied in modern capitalist society. 'Production does not only produce man as a commodity.... it produces him as a *mentally* and *physically* dehumanized being ...'⁶⁰ Again, '.... this restricted character of development consists not only in the exclusion of one class from development, but also in the narrow-mindedness of the excluding class, and the "inhuman" is to be found also within the ruling class.'⁶¹

Under capitalist commodity production, individual values are denied, 'for.... money.... confounds and exchanges everything, it is the universal *confusion and transposition* of all things, the inverted world....' But, 'let us assume *man* to be *man*, and his relation to the world a human one. Then love can only be exchanged for love, trust for trust, etc. Every one of your relations to man and to nature must be a *specific expression*....of your *real individual life*.'⁶²

Humanism's task today is therefore, according to Marx, to struggle for the end of the iniquities of capitalism through a social revolution for the sake of man himself.

In an article (in the *Vorwärts*, August 10, 1844) he wrote: 'A social revolution is a human protest against an inhuman life....'⁶³ And, in the *German Ideology* he added: 'Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a *revolution*.'⁶⁴

A distinctive thought of Marx was of course the idea that the social revolution for the liberation of man must now be led by the proletariat. But in this leading role, he held, the interest of a specific class coincided with the general interest of the people.

On the one hand, '.... the proletarians, if they are to assert themselves as individuals, will have to abolish the very conditions of their existence hitherto....' At the same time, the proletariat is a class 'which is, in short, a *total loss* of humanity, and which can only redeem itself by a *total redemption of humanity*.'⁶⁵ The proletariat again is a class which 'cannot abolish the conditions of its own life without abolishing *all* the inhuman conditions of life of society today which are summed up in its own situation.'⁶⁷

The *German Ideology* repeatedly emphasised the close connection between the idea of the proletarian revolution and the vision of individual liberation.

Here are the relevant passages :

'....by the overthrow of the existing state of society by the communist revolution.... and the abolition of private property the liberation of each single individual will be accomplished....'⁶⁸

'.... in the appropriation by the proletarians, a mass of instruments of production must be made subject to each individual and property to all.... Only at this stage does self-activity coincide with material life, which corresponds to the development of individuals into complete individuals....'⁶⁹

'.... private property can be abolished only on condition

of an all-round development of individuals.... and only individuals that are developing in an all-round fashion can appropriate them.... Within communist society, the only society in which the original and free development of individuals ceases to be a mere phrase,.... this development is determined precisely by.... the universal character of the activity of individuals....'⁷⁰

'The all-round development of the individual will only cease to be conceived as ideal, as vocation, etc., when the impact of the world which stimulates the real development of the abilities of the individual comes under the control of individuals themselves, as the communists desire.'⁷¹

That the mature Marx did not lose his early vision of man is demonstrated by the *Capital* which talks of 'the self-realisation of the person' and of 'fully developed human beings.'⁷² And full thirty years after the *German Ideology*, after a life time of bitter struggle, Marx could still with almost youthful enthusiasm write in the *Critique of the Gotha Program* (1875):

'In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of individuals under division of labour, and therefore, also the anti-thesis between mental and physical labour has vanished, after labour has become not only a means of life but life's prime want, after the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly— only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be fully left behind and society inscribe on its banners: from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs'⁷³

Lenin also persisted in believing that socialism is not merely "the method of adding to the efficiency of production, but the only method of producing fully-developed human beings.'⁷⁴

The concept of man in Marx's philosophy is borne out by his dialectical view of human freedom of action within the

frame-work of objective social necessity. Such necessity cannot be transcended, we cannot bring back the 'golden age', or vanished antique or feudal conditions. Yet, freedom of individual action is still a reality.

Freedom cannot mean absolute indeterminism, for that would posit events without any cause, Freedom cannot mean the absence of any objective law of development, for man himself discovers laws or trends in social evolution. But even within an ultimately stronger necessity, freedom of action remains, and this implies individual choice and responsibility, though we thereby only advance or retard the objective development.⁷⁵ Marx wrote to Kugelmann on April 17, 1871: 'World history would indeed be very easy to make, if the struggle were taken up only on condition of infallibly favourable chances. It would, on the other hand, be of a very mystical nature, if "accidents" played no part. These accidents themselves fall naturally into the general course of development.... acceleration and delay are very dependent upon such "accidents"....'⁷⁶

Historical determinism is not something imposed on men from above; it arises out of human actions.⁷⁷ Engels wrote: '*History does nothing.... it "wages no battles"*. It is *man*, real living man, that does all that ... "history" is not a person apart, using man as a means for *its own* particular aims; history is *nothing but* the activity of man pursuing his aims.'⁷⁸ And Marx remarked: '*Ideas cannot carry any thing out at all. In order to carry out ideas men are needed who dispose of a certain practical force.*'⁷⁹

5

The Socialist Perspective

Theory, cynics say, is but word-spinning. It may also be recalled that, unlike his great utopian predecessors, Marx steadfastly refused to draw any detailed picture of the socialist future. Thus it is quite possible to argue that socialist reality will have little room for Marx's vision of liberated man.

Still, Marx's humanism is an integral part of his outlook and cannot be brushed aside without falsifying the richness of his basic approach. And, the perennial attraction of Socialism for conscious men undoubtedly does consist in the idea of a better world for humanity, which, Marx taught us, will arise from concrete objective social conditions at a particular point in the historical evolution, though it will not come automatically but only through human struggle.

Recent history has shown that a socialist society, long considered to be mere day-dreaming, can come about after all. And if the new society has not yet risen up to Marx's humanism, the fact remains that his fundamental thought still has the greatest authority with all Socialists, and since in recent times there is a perceptible and insistent return to Marx's own original thinking, the struggle for fulfilment of the entire theory will certainly continue and not fade out of the perspective.

Revolutions develop differently from previous anticipations ; reality of course is more complex than originally expected.⁸⁰ Under such circumstances, men are often disillusioned ; but people steeled in a theory are not easily disheartened, they persist in struggle. There are others however guiding a movement who turn into pragmatists or realists as they would call themselves, especially after some initial achievement ; they rest on their oars, they forget the wisdom of their own theory, they become conservatives.

On November 23, 1871, Marx wrote to Bolte : 'The antiquated makes an attempt to maintain itself within the newly-achieved form.'⁸¹ He was obviously thinking of the possibility of conservatism cropping up within a revolution.

Against such dangers Marx implied the necessity of ceaseless alertness. 'Proletarian revolutions,' he said '...criticize themselves constantly.... come back to the apparently accomplished in order to begin it afresh....'⁸²

Proletarian dictatorship was the proclaimed weapon of himself for the purpose of the socialist revolution. Under

socialism today, there is however some times a danger of confusing the means (the dictatorship of the proletariat) with the end (a free humane society). For who does not feel tempted to think that it is easier to rule by force rather than by persuasion?⁸³ Antonio Gramsci was one of the farsighted wise Marxists who thought otherwise.⁸⁴

Marx's warning in September 1850, against his critics in the Communist League is still pertinent: 'Just as the Democrats made a sort of holy entity out of the word people, you are doing the same with the word proletariat.'⁸⁵

Lenin repeatedly asserted that the dictatorship of the proletariat must not be reduced to that of the Party or its elite leadership. Trotsky, in his famous theory of "substitutionism", stressed the same danger. Stalin in his written word agreed with this stand. Yet the Soviets of the proletariat and the peasantry have perhaps been allowed to recede into the background in the lands of socialism.

Marx, in his protest against 'regimented communism', set his face against bureaucracy: 'Bureaucracy regards itself,' he said, 'as the be-all and the end-all of the state.... The all-pervading universal spirit of bureaucracy is *Mystery*, secrecy.... Worship of authority is its *way of thinking*.'⁸⁶ This is no mere juvenile idealism, for we have also the Founders' views of post-revolutionary development, almost a generation later. Thus, Marx said in 1875: 'Freedom consists in converting the state from an organ standing above society into the completely subordinated to it.'⁸⁷ And Engels wrote in 1878: 'State interference in social relations becomes, in one domain after another, superfluous, and then withers away of itself....'⁸⁸ Again, 'In proportion as anarchy in social production vanishes, the political authority of the state dies out. Man, at last the master of his own form of social organisation, becomes at the same time the Lord over nature, his own master — free.'⁸⁹

In view of all this, Lenin wanted to popularise the administrative apparatus, to whittle down the revolutionary

bureaucracy. His successors have gone in rather towards tightening it up, without even educating the people about the original stand, about the direction towards which the socialist society must strive to move.

Marx's expectation was that after smashing up the old bourgeois administrative set-up, genuine popular participation in government would go on increasing. The dangers of counter-revolution and external intervention do make this difficult. Still it is arguable that widening and deepening the popular base is a mighty help in stabilising a post-revolutionary regime. Continuous democratisation and more free-discussion would be invaluable in this matter, in the interest of the new order itself. Marx stressed the need for criticism even in his last days.⁹⁰ Engels wrote to Bebel on 2 May, 1891: '... socialist science is necessary, but it cannot exist without freedom... So it is necessary to put up with a certain amount of unpleasantness... without bristling up.'⁹¹

Socialism's first task is indeed the overthrow of capitalist economic exploitation. Yet it cannot very well stop there. Rising standards of life and technological triumphs are not enough; after all, advanced capitalist countries are not quite incapable of this. An 'increase of wages,' Marx remarked, '... would not win for the worker or for labour their human status and dignity.'⁹² And he wrote in the *Deutsche Brüsseler Zeitung* in 1847: '...the proletariat... needs its courage, confidence, pride and independence even more than its daily bread.'⁹³

The Socialist perspective therefore cannot today, even after early historic triumphs, dispense with Marx's vision: 'We have seen the importance which must be attributed, in a socialist perspective, to the *wealth* of human needs.... A new manifestation of *human* powers and a new enrichment of the human being....'⁹⁴

The perspective is clear enough in the *German Ideology*, the first comprehensive presentation of the basic theory: 'In the present epoch, the domination of material conditions over

individuals, and the suppression of individuality by chance, has assumed its sharpest and most universal form, thereby setting existing individuals a very definite task. It has set them the task of replacing the domination of circumstances and chance over individuals by the domination of individuals over chance and circumstances.... it has.... called for liberation from one quite definite mode of development. This task, dictated by present-day conditions, coincides with the task of the communist organisation of society.'⁹⁵

We read also in the same work that the socialist stage 'corresponds to the development of individuals into complete individuals....'⁹⁶ The *German Ideology* speaks of '....for the communists the creative manifestation of life arising from the free development of all abilities ...'⁹⁷ And finally: '....the workers assert in their communist propaganda that the vocation, destiny, task of every person is to achieve all-round development of all his abilities, *including* for example, the ability to think....'⁹⁸ We are some times in danger of forgetting all this.

Engels confirmed the vision decades later in the *Anti-Duhring* read and approved by Marx himself. Therein he held up - 'The possibility of securing for every member of society, by means of socialized production, an existence not only fully sufficient materially and becoming day by day more full, but an existence guaranteeing to all the free development and exercise of their physical and mental faculties....'⁹⁹ No ideal indeed can be clearer as an ideal.

After the first indispensable essential, the transfer of the means of production from owning classes to society as a whole, the Socialist perspective thus must consciously aim at man's all-round development. This cannot come automatically as a matter of course in God's good time. Such a belief is rank heresy from Marx's point of view. It has to be achieved through the dialectical struggle of man himself within the economic frame work of Socialist society itself. If this

perspective fails us, Marx's teachings will have to be folded up, and forgotten.

NOTES

1. The *abbreviations* stand for the following writings of Marx and Engels :
 A.D. for *Anti-Duhring*, 1878 (Moscow edition, 1962).
 C.G.P. for *Critique of the Gotha Program*, 1875 (in H.W.).
 C.H.D. for *Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic*, 1844 (in E.P.M.).
 C.H.R. for *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right—Introduction*, 1844 (translated in *Karl Marx : Early Writings* by T.B. Bottomore, 1963).
 C.P.E. for *Critique of Political Economy—Preface*, 1859 (in S.W.).
 E.P.M. for *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 1844 (Moscow edition, 1961).
 G.I. for *The German Ideology*, 1845-47 (Moscow edition, 1964).
 H.F. for *The Holy Family*, 1845 (Moscow edition, 1956).
 H.W. for *Karl Marx : Historical Writings*. Vol. I (People's Publishing House, 1944).
 J.Q. for *On the Jewish Question*, 1844 (translated in *Karl Marx : Early Writings* by T.B. Bottomore, 1963).
 L.F. for *Ludwig Feuerbach*, 1838 (Moscow edition, 1946).
 S.W. for *Karl Marx : Selected Works*, Vol. I (Moscow, 1946).
 T.F. for *Theses on Feuerbach*, 1945 (in the Addenda to G.I.).

The following secondary books have been largely utilised :
 Bottomore, T.B., *Karl Marx : Early Writings*, 1963.
 Bottomore, T.B. and Rubel, M., *Karl Marx : Selected Writing in Sociology*, 1963 edition.

Garaudy, R., *Karl Marx : The Evolution of His Thought*, 1967.

Lewis, J., *Life and Teaching of Karl Marx*, 1965.

Mehring, F., *Karl Marx*, 1918 (English edition, 1951).

Schaff, A., *A Philosophy of Man*, 1962 (English edition, 1963).

I have also found K. Damodaran's article on Alienation (*Mainstream*, May 4, 1968) very useful. Three essays in *Revisionism*, (1962). pp. 179-211, may be mentioned in this connection.

I could not consult the following :

Adams, H.P., *Karl Marx in His Earlier Writings*, 1940.

Cornu, A., *Marx et Engels*.

Fromm, E., *Marx's Concept of Man*, 1961.

2. CPE (S.W., p. 302).

3. SW, pp. 97-98.

4. Engels to Schmidt, 5 August 1890 (S.W., p. 320).

5. Even in the CPE, Marx hinted at the relative autonomy of at least certain parts of the superstructure like art. Engels pursued the subject in his famous letters on Historical Materialism : to Schmidt, 5 August 1890 ; to Bloch, 21 September 1890 ; to Schmidt, 27 October 1890 ; to Mehring, 14 July 1893 ; to Starkenburg, 25 January 1894 (in S.W., pp. 320-32). The possibility of a timelag in the adjustment of the superstructure is indicated in *Capital*, IV (Garaudy, p. 77).

6. The revelutionary tactics of 1848-49 went into the background in 1850-51 (at the time of the split in the Communist League) when bourgeois economy revealed unexpected powers of survival and even expansion for the time being. In contrast with the idea of a violent revolution in the *Manifesto*, the possibility of a peaceful transition to socialism was admitted by Marx in the Hague Speech of 1872, and by Engels in his comments on the Erfurt Program in 1891. (Lewis, p. 266.)

7. Lewis, p. 37.
8. Garaudy, p. 19.
9. Lewis, pp. 36-37.
10. S. W., p. 22.
11. Garaudy, p. 33.
12. See Garaudy and Lewis in particular.
13. Mehring, ch. II, secs. 3 and 4.
14. Garaudy, p. 23.
15. Mehring, p. 31.
16. Garaudy, pp. 15-18.
17. Garaudy, p. 36.
18. Lewis, pp. 34-35.
19. EMP. Bottomore's translation in *Early Writings*, p. 167.
20. CHD (p. 145 of EPM).
21. CHR in Bottomore : *Early Writings*, p. 53.
22. HF quoted in Mehring, p. 99.
23. — p. 176.
24. GI, pp. 414, 461.
25. TF (pp. 651-653, in the Addenda to GI). I have followed the translation of the original version.
26. CHR in Bottomore : *Early Writings*, p. 52.
27. — p. 59.
28. *Eighteenth Brumaire* (1852) in HW, p. 293.
29. EPM, quoted in Garaudy, p. 80.
30. GI, quoted in Garaudy, p. 84.
31. CPE, quoted in Garaudy, p. 82.
32. Garaudy, p. 81.
33. LF, pp., 24-25.
34. Garaudy, p. 26.
35. GI, quoted in Bottomore : *Selected Writings in Sociology*, p. 110.
36. EPM, p. 125.
37. CHR in Bottomore : *Early Writings*, pp. 43-44.
38. *Capital*, I (1867).
39. JQ in Bottomore : *Early Writings*, pp. 19, 27-28, 31.

40. EPM in Bottomore's translation; *Early Writings*, p. 76.
41. — p. 15.
42. — pp. 69, 71.
43. — pp. 72-73.
44. — pp. 75-76.
45. — p. 77.
46. — p. 78.
47. — p. 79.
48. — p. 80.
49. — p. 126.
50. — p. 106.
51. JQ in Bottomore: *Early Writings*, p. 37.
52. EPM, Bottomore's translation in *Selected Writings in Sociology*, p. 250.
53. HF, p. 15.
54. GI, p. 93.
55. CHR, in Bottomore: *Early Writings*, p. 52.
56. — p. 59.
57. EPM, Bottomore's translation *Early Writings*, p. 155.
58. JQ in Bottomore: *Early Writings*, p. 31.
59. EPM, in Bottomore's translation in *Selected Writings in Sociology*, p. 250.
60. in *Early Writings*, p. 138.
61. GI, p. 475.
62. EPM, Bottomore's translation in *Early Writings*, pp. 193-94.
63. Bottomore: *Selected Writings*, p. 242.
64. GI, p. 86.
65. — p. 95.
66. CHR, in Bottomore: *Early Writings*, p. 58.
67. HF, p. 52.
68. GI, p. 49.
69. — p. 84.
70. — p. 483.
71. — pp. 315-16.

72. Lewis, p. 56.
73. CGP. in H.W., pp. 512-13.
74. Lewis, p. 56, footnote 1.
75. Schaff, ch. 7.
76. *Letters to Kugelmann* (Lawrence and Wishart edition 1941), p. 125.
77. Schaff, p. 71.
78. H.F., p. 125.
79. — p. 160.
80. Schaff, p. 94.
81. Quoted in Garaudy, p. 191.
82. *Eighteenth Brumaire* (1852), in H.W., p. 296.
83. Schaff, p. 118.
84. See my *Thought of Gramsci* (*Mainstream*, 2 November 1968). See Also the present book, pp. 97-124.
85. Quoted in Mehring, p. 206.
86. CHR, quoted in Karyakin's article in the *World Marxist Review*, May 1963.
87. CGP, quoted in Garaudy, p. 190.
88. AD, p. 385.
89. — p. 391.
90. Lewis, p. 269.
91. Quoted in Schaff, p. 127.
92. EPM, quoted in Garaudy, p. 158.
93. Quoted in Mehring, pp. 131-32.
94. EPM, Bottomore's translation in *Early Writings*, p. 168.
95. GI, pp. 482-83.
96. — p. 84.
97. — p. 242.
98. — p. 315.
99. AD, p. 387.

HISTORICAL WRITINGS OF ENGELS

On this occasion of the 150th birth-anniversary of Frederick Engels and 75 years after his death, we are reminded of a recent revival in scholarly circles of the old idea that Engels departed from and distorted to some extent the true teachings of Marx. This is however essentially an untenable position. Of course, two thinkers, however close their thoughts and understanding might have been, can never be identical in their expressions, emphases or temperaments. But Marx and Engels cooperated for four decades with the greatest harmony. They produced joint works in the earlier period. They arranged something like a division of labour between themselves. Their later writings carried each other's approval (in the case of the *Anti-Duhring* for example). One could thoroughly grasp the thought of the other and thus complete the unfinished undertakings (the later volumes of *Capital* for instance). Above all, the two comrades carried on over the years a voluminous correspondence (unfortunately not all of it available yet in English translation), a mass of letters in which information and views were exchanged, opinions sought from each other, new points suggested. Marx was never very tolerant about deviations from his standpoint, but nowhere do we find him criticising Engels in this respect.

It fell to the lot of Engels to popularise Marxian ideas, and popularisation often enough carries the risk of oversimplification. Thus, the intricate picture in Marx's *Formen* of possible social formations is reduced indeed to a simplistic formula in Engels's later writings. This is easily understandable, for it was the task of Engels to drive home to the general reader the novel conception of the succession of social stages

as the essence of history. A too-complicated analysis or an overelaborate presentation would have defeated its very purpose.

I

A favourite argument of those who would sharply demarcate Engels from Marx is the contention that Engels was mechanical in outlook. This can be demolished easily enough, at least in the domain of the philosophy of history.

"History does nothing", wrote Engels as early as 1845 in a passage sometimes wrongly attributed to Marx, "it 'possesses no immense wealth', wages no battles'. It is *man*, real living man, that does all that, that possesses and fights; 'history' is not a person apart, using man as a means for *its own* particular aims; history is *nothing but* the activity of man pursuing his aims" (*The Holy Family*, Moscow, 1956, p. 125).

This stress on the individual activities of man, pursuing their concrete particular aims, is a clear contradiction of any mechanistic interpretation of history. It is in substantial agreement with Marx's classic dictum in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*: "Men make their own history", though Marx was more precise in adding—"but they do not make it just as they please."

A mechanical view of history inevitably tends to make the superstructure a mere reflex of the basis. Marx, even in the *Critique of Political Economy*, mentions however the relative autonomy of certain parts of the superstructure, and in *Capital IV* (*Theories of Surplus-Value*), he does indicate the time-lag in the adjustment of the superstructure. But nowhere in Marxian classics has this indirect process of the link between the basis and the superstructure been more vividly brought out than in the letters of Engels himself to the German disciples, letters which give the *coup de grace* to the supposed mechanistic conceptions of Engels. The letters are famous, but not often remembered in detail in the practical applications of Marxism then and now. Extensive quotations may therefore be justified to firmly establish the exact posi-

tion of Engels. They are taken from the *Selected Works*, II, Moscow, 1958 (pp. 486-505).

"... if this man has not discovered yet that while the material mode of existence is the *primum agens* that does not preclude the ideological spheres from reacting upon it in their turn, though with a secondary effect, he cannot possibly have understood the subject... the world 'materialistic' serves many of the younger writers in Germany as a mere phrase with which anything and everything is labelled without further study.... All history must be studied afresh.... It often seems as if these gentlemen think anything is good enough for the workers. If these gentlemen only knew how Marx thought his best things were still not good enough for the worker...." (Engels to C. Schmidt, 5 August 1890).

"The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure.... also exercise their influence upon the course of historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their *form*.... the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary. Otherwise the application of the theory to any period of history one chose would be easier than the solution of a simple equation of the first degree.... The Prussian state also arose and developed from historical, ultimately economic causes. But it could scarcely be maintained without pedantry that among the many small states of North Germany, Brandenburg was specifically determined by economic necessity to become the great power.... and not by other elements as well.... Without making oneself ridiculous it would be a difficult thing to explain in terms of economics the existence of every small state in Germany, past and present, or the origin of the High German consonant shifts...." (Engels to J. Bloch, 21-22 September 1890).

"The basis of the law of inheritance.... is an economic one. Nevertheless, it would be difficult to prove, for instance, that the absolute liberty of the testator in England and the severe restrictions imposed upon him in France are only due in every detail to economic causes.... the philosophy of every epoch....

has as its presupposition certain definite thought material handed down to it by its predecessors, from which it takes its start. And that is why economically backward countries can still play first fiddle in philosophy ... If therefore Barth supposes that we deny any and every reaction of the political, etc., reflexes of the economic movement upon the movement itself, he is simply tilting at windmills.... What these gentlemen all lack is dialectics. They always see only here cause, there effect.... Hegel has never existed for them." (Engels to C. Schmidt, 27 October 1890).

"....there is only one point lacking, which, however, Marx and I always failed to stress enough in our writings and in regard to which we are all equally guilty.... we neglected the formal side.... for the sake of the content. This has given our adversaries a welcome opportunity for misunderstandings and distortions.... Hanging together with this is the fatuous notion of the ideologists that because we deny an independent historical development to the various ideological spheres which play a part in history we also deny them any *effect upon history*" (Engels to F. Mehring, 14 July 1893).

"It is not that the economic condition is the *cause* and *alone active*, while everything else only is a passive effect.... it is not, as people try here and there conveniently to imagine, that the economic condition produces an automatic effect. No. Men make their history themselves, only they do so in a given environment which conditions it and on the basis of actual relations already existing, among which the economic relations ... are still ultimately the decisive ones, forming the red thread which runs through them and which alone leads to understanding.... The further the particular sphere which we are investigating is removed from the economic sphere and approaches that of pure abstract ideology, the more shall we find it exhibiting accidents in its development, the more will its curve run in a zigzag. But if you plot the average axis of the curve, you will find that the axis of the curve will run more and more nearly parallel to the axis of the curve of

economic development the longer the period considered and the wider the field dealt with" (Engels to H. Starkenburg, 25 January 1894).

All concrete practical applications of Marxism to history must constantly bear in mind the golden words of Engels above, as they must turn for a full model to Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire*. And the position of Engels as a true expositor of the Marxian theory of history must in consequence remain unassailable.

II

Prehistory, the story of mankind before written records, exercised a great fascination on Engels. Marx and Engels drew their concept of all-round evolution from Hegel of course. They were among the first however to welcome Darwin's specific working out of an idea of the evolution of the human species, though they were not slow to point out that the Darwinian struggle for survival was not the only element in the ascent of man from the animal world.

Two studies of Engels (both in the *Selected Works*, II, Moscow, 1958) bear vivid witness to his keen interest in man's prehistory.

The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man was written in 1876 but first published only in 1896, the year after Engels's death. This is an imaginative but highly suggestive sketch of the early evolution of man, his differentiation from simian-like ancestors which Darwin postulated. Engels found the keynote of the process in labour – "labour created man himself". All anthropoid apes can stand erect, but only in a most clumsy fashion. Man alone gained the habitually erect posture by acquiring and transmitting over the generations the skill of using the hands in manifold kinds of labour; thus "the hand had become free" and with it had come the firm stance on the two legs alone. The skill in the use of hands in labour could alone produce the first tools – "no simian hand has ever fashioned even the crudest of stone knives". Along with the hand developed, according to Darwin's

law of correlation of growth, other parts of man's organic being. Thus the labour activity would lead to the need for greater communication and so onward to clear speech and language. The intricate specific human brain developed as a result of the stimuli of labour and speech. Out of all this, definite organised societies took shape in place of the primitive hordes. Skill in the labour of hand led on to hunting and fishing, and the invaluable protein meat diet. The dangers of a purely predatory economy eating up natural food resources led to the deliberate increase of food supply by agriculture and stabilised division of labour. Fire was harnessed, animals domesticated—each a milestone in man's progress. Then followed settled habitations, crafts, and civilisation began to loom nearer.

Engels has been most ridiculed for his *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884). This was because he welcomed and relied most heavily on the two books by Morgan.¹ Marx himself was highly impressed by Morgan, prepared an abstract of his work with critical notes, and wanted to write a book on the subject. It was this wish that Engels carried out the year after Marx's death. That did not save Engels from scholarly opprobrium, for Morgan was soon rejected by the academic world, almost excluded from study in the early 20th century, and is still largely regarded as heretical. Yet, in all fairness, something solid can be said on behalf of Engels in this matter.

The outcry against Morgan was due largely to his challenge against orthodoxy and the establishment. He was outmoded of course by the coming in of new material, but so were many other anthropologists, like Westermarck, who however escaped much censure. When the storm against Morgan subsided a little, the anthropologist Calverton could put it on record² that after all Morgan was "much closer to the truth" than very many of his contemporaries and successors. Even today, Morgan carries informations and reflections of great value to the unbiased reader.

Secondly, the discoveries which outmoded Morgan came after Engels's and his time. And, Engels was quite aware of the tentative nature of Morgan's scheme. The preface of 1891 mentions Engels's "careful revision" of the text, made necessary by recent progress in knowledge and adds that "due regard has been paid to the present state of science." Who can doubt that, had Engels lived a few more years, he would have drastically changed the book in the future further light of the "state of science", Engels who was ever alert to fresh scientific discoveries? He was certainly not like some followers of Daniel de Leon who made the theory of Morgan a cardinal part of their Marxism.

In the third place, what attracted Marx and Engels was the implication of Morgan's thought rather than any of the specific conclusions in Morgan's pattern. Engels wrote in the preface of 1884: "... Morgan rediscovered in America, in his own way, the materialist conception of history that had been discovered by Marx forty years ago...." Again, "Morgan's great merit lies in having discovered and reconstructed this prehistoric foundation of our written history in the main features." For the first time, there was an attempt at a materialistic interpretation of prehistory on roughly Marxian lines. No wonder the sponsors of the original interpretation were excited with the daring American author who unwittingly vindicated them. They would have been even more pleased had they lived to see the convincing capture of the domain of prehistory by the materialistic approach today, as in the work of Professor Gordon Childe for example.

Fourthly, Engels understandably felt gratified by Morgan's rejection of our existing society as something final, the very attitude which in truth raised the critics to fury. At the end of *The Origin* (*Selected Works*, II, Moscow, 1958, p. 327), Engels quoted Morgan's verdict on today's civilisation in which the latter anticipated "the next higher plane of society", which will be "*a revival, in a higher form, of the liberty, equality and fraternity of the ancient gentes.*"

III

Parts of *The Origin* were Engels's own contribution. Much about the Greeks and the Romans, the Celts and the Germans were "substantially" Engels's additions and are of special value as they reveal his interest in the documented story of antiquity as well. Students of ancient history will find suggestive leads, for example in the accounts of the rise of the Athenian state and the fall of the West Roman empire (*Ibid.*, pp. 263, 298 *et seq.*).

Chapter V on the origins of the Athenian state is an excellent summary, of definite events and available written records this time, valuable even to historians today. It is preceded by an admirable summing up of conditions on the eve of the formation of the state in Athens. The old gentile system, the mainstay of the tribal order, was dying away. Father-right and inheritance of property by patriarchal families undermined the gens. The "first rudiments of a hereditary nobility and monarchy" had begun. Slavery had started to come in. "Only one thing was missing: an institution that would not only.... sanctify private property.... but would also stamp the gradually developing new forms of acquiring property.... with the seal of general public recognition; an institution that would perpetuate, not only the newly-rising class division of society, but also the right of the possessing class to exploit.... And this institution arrived. The state was invented" (*Ibid.*, p. 263).

No more succinct concrete account of the rise of a state, with some definite historical evidence, is indeed available in the range of Marxian classics.

Chapter VII contains a penetrating study of the fall of the West Roman empire. Rome had "crushed the last remnants of local and national self-expression. The new-fangled Romanism could not compensate for this loss.... The immense human mass of that enormous territory was held together by one bond alone—the Rome state; and this, in time, had become their worst enemy and oppressor.... Taxes, services for the

state and levies of all kinds drove the mass of the people deeper and deeper into poverty.... its order was worse than the worst disorder, and the barbarians.... were hailed by them as saviours.... Universal impoverishment; decline of commerce, handicrafts, the arts, and of the population; decay of the towns; retrogression of agriculture to a lower state — this was the final result of Roman world supremacy.... Latifundian economy based on slave labour was no longer profitable; Estate after estate was parcelled out and leased in small lots to hereditary tenants.... These were not slaves but neither were they free.... the forerunners of the mediaeval serfs.... free small peasants still existed.... they frequently placed themselves under the protection, the patronage, of men possessed of power...." (*Ibid.*, pp. 298-301).

An excellent epitaph indeed on the West Roman empire. And, incidentally, *The Origin* is thus not a book to be lightly thrust into the scrapheap of obscurity, as pedants do so often without even taking the trouble to read it through.

IV

Engels was naturally attracted by the history of his own native land, and this interest was embodied in three remarkable historical works: *The Peasant War in Germany* (1850), *Germany: Revolution and Counterrevolution* (1851-52), and the unfinished *Role of Force in History* (conceived in 1886).

That the broad sweep of Engels's historical vision took in the middle ages as well as antiquity and prehistory, is proved conclusively by his detailed study of *The Peasant War in Germany* (*Historical Writings*, II, PPH, 1945). The facts are drawn from Zimmermann's book of 1841, as pointed out by Engels himself who was of course not a research scholar. But the arrangement, the analysis, the comments and the conclusions are Engel's own and are of such high order that even today teachers and students of history may profit thereby. Zimmermann did not show the religious-political controversies of early 16th century as "a reflection of the contemporary class struggles", or a clear grasp of "the social conditions

which determined both the outbreak and the outcome of the struggle". Engels explained the origin of the revolt, the class character of the attitude, of different parties and different theories, the result of the struggle "as necessarily following from the historically established social conditions". This was in the best tradition of the concrete application of the materialist conception of history, inaugurated by Marx himself in his celebrated studies on French history. We have in Engels's book fascinating sketches like the earlier Bundschuh movement; the Twelve Articles of the peasants; Luther's advance and retreat; the contrast between the middle-class reformist Luther and the plebeian revolutionary Munzer; the analogy between the upheaval of 1525 and that of 1848-50; the much wider vista opened up in the 19th century movement with the advent of the proletariat. Indeed, the booklet is of absorbing interest and abiding value.

Germany: Revolution and Counterrevolution (Historical Writings, I, PPH, 1944) is an outstanding and brilliant example of writing contemporary history. It first appeared as a string of 20 letters³ in 1851-52. Marx was commissioned to write them and was at first regarded as the author. But he was then neck-deep in his economic studies and his command over English was still inadequate; yet the commission which was opening up a financially-necessary journalistic career could not be spurned. Loyally and manfully Engels stepped into the breach, Marx being in effect only a collaborator. Engels's work was quite remarkable on its own merits. This study of the 1848-50 storm in Germany is still the best short but penetrating narrative of the subject, and it is difficult to think of a better review even today—of the German states before the revolt, the various insurrections, the different assemblies, the impact of the neighbours west and eastwards, the ebbing away of the spirit of revolution, the restoration of order. Space does not permit here any reproduction of the innumerable illuminating comments, the series of effective suggestive passages, the memorable reflective formulations. In

1967 the Chicago University Press republished the booklet along with *The Peasant War* as a volume in its series of classic European historians.

The Role of Force in History was planned by Engels in the last decade of his life, and could not be finished on account of the pressure of more urgent tasks which after Marx's death always dogged the steps of his friend. The scheme was to rewrite and elaborate the sections of the *Anti-Duhring* dealing with the theory of force, the materialistic conditions of the relation between economy and politics. Duhring had argued that political relationships, enslavement for example, are fundamental, economic dependence being merely the effect. Engels replied that "force is only the means", "the aim is economic advance." "...before slavery becomes possible, a certain level of production must already have been reached and a certain inequality of distribution must already have appeared.... Slavery in the United States of America was based far less on force than on the English cotton industry.... The subjugation of a man to make him do servile work, in all its forms, presupposes that the subjugator has at his disposal the instruments of labour.... Private property by no means makes its appearance in history as the result of robbery or force.... the institution of private property must already be in existence for a robber to be able to appropriate another person's property...." (*Anti-Duhring*, Moscow, 1954, pp. 222-24).

Engels thought of a factual survey of the role of force in history, as an appendage to his examination of the theory of force; his unfinished draft was first published in English only in 1958. This brings us back to German history, to that part of it corresponding to Engels's own maturity, to the Bismarckian period of "blood and iron". Here we come across scintillating comments which are of use to any modern teacher of Bismarckian polity. His remarks are thought-provoking indeed and this is after all the aim of a true historian.

The summing up of Bismarck can hardly be excelled. "The

bourgeoisie provided him with the aim; Louis Napoleon showed him the way; only the actual execution was Bismarck's own work." Bismarck is at last cut down to his proper size, though our hero-worshippers would be scandalised.

Three courses were open for German unification after 1848: "the open revolutionary way" of uniting all Germans by sweeping away the obsolete order and the reactionary princes; unification under Austria which would have prolonged the medieval chaos; unification under Prussia which would leave many Germans out and place Germany under the heel of Prussia's native bureaucracy.

The German bourgeoisie claimed that it stood for real unification, but there were only two decisive forces: "the organised force of the state, the army, and the unorganised elemental force of the popular masses." The German bourgeoisie had forgotten to evoke the last and was therefore helpless before the first.

So Bismarck stepped forth. He chose the Prussian path and the organised army. Personally, he was the translation of an adventurous pretender into the junker squire. He fulfilled the national demand for unification, but not the liberal dream of its bourgeois exponents. The Prussian aspirations coincided only in part with the national demand, without sacrificing the essential character of Prussian rule.

Consciously or unconsciously, Bismarck found his mentor in Louis Bonaparte. The latter had "destroyed the political domination of the bourgeoisie, only to preserve its social domination". He also showed that "universal suffrage could be transformed into an investment for the oppression of the masses". And Bismarck was indeed an apt pupil.

V

The wealth of Engels's historical thought is also illustrated by the innumerable observations bearing on different aspects of history in a host of miscellaneous writings. Only a few of these can be noted here in passing, at the risk of appearing to recite a catalogue.

The life of England, his adopted country, was familiar to him in every aspect, to a much greater extent than in the case of the recluse Marx. Engels knew English labour conditions and the English labour movement inside out. His introduction in the English edition (1892) of *The Condition of the Working Class in England* tells us much about the working class and the history of its movement. The original German book (1845), a fine bit of 19th century social prose, is a classic on English conditions and antedated by over two decades the more famous vivid pages of *Capital* I. Engels contributed on current history to most English labour papers, from the time of the Chartists down to the social-democrats. Mention may be made of his eleven little-known letters of 1881 (Burmon Publishing House, Calcutta, undated,⁴ in which he drew freely from the historical experience at home and abroad to illustrate his points. Engels and Marx took part in the making of contemporary history as well, in the course of the labour struggles from the days of Harney to those of Mann.

The sister island, Ireland, was better known to Engels than even to Marx. The letter Engels wrote to Marx on 23 May 1856 on his Irish tour (*Historical Writings*, I, PPH, 1944) is a vivid sketch of Irish conditions and the people, supplementing the references in his own earlier *Condition*. Both are still of use to students of Irish history for the unerring concentration on the essential. It was in the letter above that Engels formulated two famous Marxian postulates: "Ireland may be regarded as the first English colony" and "the so-called liberty of English citizens is based on the oppression of the colonies".

On numerous occasions Engels discussed the affairs of South and Near-Eastern Europe. They were mostly topical notes dealing with military matters. It may be noted that Engels seems to have had a certain prejudice against Slavic aspirations, except in the case of the Poles possibly.

The booklet *Revolution in Spain* (*Historical Writings*, II, PPH, 1945) contains seven fascinating contributions from Engels, taken from different periodicals.⁵ The critique on the

Spanish army points out that the lack of military discipline in the Spanish soldiery can be cured only by a reform in the civil life. The two sketches on Badajoz and Bidasoa reveal an intimate knowledge of military tactics in a detailed study of famous episodes in the Peninsular War. Three letters on the contemporary fighting in Spanish Morocco reveal the same grasp and understanding of a military situation. Lastly, there is a political review – *The Bakuninists at Work* – sharply analysing the role of the anarchists in the Spanish uprising of 1873. Engels's caustic comment after a comprehensive analysis of events – "The Bakuninists in Spain have given us an unsurpassable example of how *not* to make a revolution" – carries a familiar ring even in the context of today's politics.

In the book *Civil War in the United States* (*Historical Writings*, II, PPH, 1945) also, Engels made a considerable contribution. The famous articles⁶ by Marx on the civil war were written in consultation and almost in collaboration with Engels. Marx even incorporated whole passages from Engels in the articles. The latter had specialised in military questions and in particular helped Marx in evaluating this aspect, though at first Engels was more pessimistic than Marx about the prospect of the desired northern victory. The 27 letters of Engels to Marx on the civil war, excerpts from which are printed in *Historical Writings*, II, must have been of much use to the latter.

On the Indian revolt, the eight letters of Engels which appeared in Dana's American paper along with the famous contributions of Marx himself are much more familiar to us and contain a penetrating analysis, of a military nature once more, of both the British and the Indian sides in the conflict. The three letters to Marx in this connection are also of much interest.

Engels followed contemporary historical events beyond the range of the Western world. This is illustrated by the letters on Persia and China and on the Chinese expedition, all written in 1857. And there is also the famous letter on the colonies to

Kautsky on 12 September 1882 which contains formulations worth recalling even today : "One thing alone is certain : the victorious proletariat can force no blessings of any kind upon any foreign nation without undermining its own victory by so doing. Which of course by no means excludes defensive wars of various kinds...." (*Historical Writings*, I. p. 606).

The profundity of Engels's historical grasp is shown in his remarkable reply to Tkachov (1875) in the *Selected Works*, II (Moscow, 1958) : "On Social Relations in Russia." The analysis here of Russian conditions is so important that it defies summary. Incidentally, anarchist concepts of an easy revolution, of a revolution by order and mere will-power as it were, of "instinctive" revolutionists who will accomplish the revolution once it is started here and there by the vanguard are demolished here with invincible historical logic while the knowledge of actual developing economic conditions in Russia is depicted in a masterly fashion. The letter to N. F. Danielson. 17 October 1893, (*Selected Works*, II) is almost prophetic. It tells the Russians that, in the absence of the social revolution in the West, the institution of the mir is doomed ; that differentiation in wealth will destroy it as surely as rich peasants destroyed Athenian tribal society. In such circumstances, capitalism with its undoubted evils was bound to come in Russia, but that need not bring despair because it can only prepare the soil for the desired social revolution. "A great nation like yours outlives every crisis. There is no great historical evil without a compensating historical progress."

Nothing need be said here about the better-known historical surveys by Engels in writings on broader topics : the advance of prehistoric studies in *The Origin*, the growth of socialism in *Anti-Duhring*, the development of philosophy in *Ludwig Feuerbach* and so on. And, pressing historical sketches, in prefaces and some articles, are too numerous to be mentioned.

Indeed the extent of historical knowledge and the depth of insight which we find in Engels fully bear out the claim that

he was one of the best-educated men of his times and a worthy partner and true comrade-in-arms of Karl Marx himself.

NOTES

1. *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity* (1871) and *Ancient Society* (1877).
2. In his *Making of Man* (1930).
3. In the *New-York Daily Tribune*.
4. From the *Labour Standard*, 1881.
5. The first appeared in the *Putnam's Magazine*, 1855, as a part of the series on European armies. The next two were published in 1858 in the *New American Encyclopaedia*. The three next on the Moorish War were 1860 editorials in the *New-York Daily Tribune*. The last was carried by *Der Volkstaat* in 1873.
6. The articles appeared in 1861-62 in *New-York Daily Tribune* and the Vienna *Die Presse*.

ON THE STALIN CENTENARY

I am promise-bound to write something on Joseph Stalin's centenary. But to write in an orderly fashion is now beyond my strength. I can try only to put down a few points in a hap-hazard manner with the hope that my readers will be kind enough to excuse the disjointed comments of an aged mind.

It is of course not possible to wipe out Stalin's name, his merits and blemishes, from history's page. Yet in my opinion, it is unseemly to send forth paeans of praise for the occasion of his centenary.

We grew up under Stalin's paternal wings, but did we then turn out to be men in Mark's mould? I remember that, at the end of the Second World War, Major Saxton presented to me a portrait of Stalin, beautifully framed, with the remark that, throughout the entire war, he had kept it with him as an inspiration. Today in my sitting room, I still have statuettes of Marx and Lenin, but I have no longer an inclination to keep by their side this portrait of Stalin. Even after the revelations of the Twentieth Congress, I could still describe Stalin as 'indubitably great' in spite of his faults, on the occasion of the Fortieth Anniversary of the Russian Revolution. In the two decades and more since then however, I have gone through the process of the collection of more and more facts, intense study, much analytical heart-searching—with the end-result of changing my views on Stalin. I am helpless if my changed opinion does not tally with the pith of a large number of communists over the world. My stand today remains unshaken by all such differences.

Of course I admit that Stalin's role in the Russian Revolu-

tion was not a minor one. When very many communist leaders headed by Lenin were forced to seek shelter in foreign lands, Stalin was certainly a leading figure among the comrades carrying on the work within Russia itself. When Lenin could at last return, Stalin had the good fortune, in the days of revolution and civil war, to become his close associate. Becoming the Party's General Secretary, Stalin did build up a firm and country-wide Party organization—indeed so firm that the doubts and warnings of the dying Lenin could be ignored; and so widespread that upto now no leadership free of the Stalin connection has yet been able to lift its head within Russia. After the expulsion of Trotsky, Stalin did win recognition all over the world as the sleepless watchman of the first Socialist fortress on the earth, beleaguered on every side by its enemies. Stalin made the vows of Preobrazensky and others his own; that, is an isolated Socialist land, the primary accumulation of capital could only be achieved by an immense expansion of industry, and this was only possible through the confiscation of agricultural resources (though this process under him turned out to be too severe, and too rapid). In the dark days of the Second World War, Stalin did become the symbol of the defence of Socialism in our world. At the end of the War, Stalin through his armed forces and diplomacy did liberate Eastern Europe, with the consequence that Soviet Russia was no longer the sole isolated Socialist State in our world. And we must not forget that even the Trotskyite Deutscher has admitted that the transformation of Russia under Stalin is a 'revolution', though as yet an 'unfinished' one.

Yet in spite of all this, Stalin has inflicted serious damage to the Socialist cause, though very many will not agree. I have no doubts on this issue. And I shall try to indicate why.

Lenin was forced by circumstance to introduce a stringent Party organization. But is it necessary to stick to this system at all times, in every land? Do circumstances never change? Is 'democracy' there in such an order? And proletarian

dictatorship ? In Marx's theory, there is bourgeois 'dictatorship' even in a bourgeois-democratic state, because the socio-economic circumstances ensure the preservation of bourgeois interests. When, in a proletarian state, the individual ownership of the means of production is no longer there and the interest of toilers must prevail, why can there be no democratic government ? Again, is one-Party rule inevitable under all circumstances ? By rejecting all such issues and ruling them out of court, Stalin did harm to the socialist cause itself. Perhaps all revolutions involve, some bloodshed. But Stalin's 'Terror' ? Not merely the 'old Bolsheviki', the associates of Lenin. Who will keep count of the thousands of ordinary comrades oppressed, inhumanly tortured, killed, spirited away beyond any one's ken, maimed for life ? And, if after six decades since Revolution, there still can be no freedom of dissent, what remains of Marx's proclaimed humanism in the land of a socialist revolution ? It is a matter of great pride for us that much socialism has grown up in the Soviet Land. But in exacting such a heavy price for this, has not Stalin tarnished the cause itself ? If Lenin had been alive longer would he not have in his subsequent days sought liberation from his own professed disciple ? How can one forget Stalin's egotism, suspicion of others, endless faith in his own self dictatorial inclinations, arrogance, his role of the sole saviour ?

In the struggle for power after Lenin's death, Stalin snatched the term 'Leninism', perhaps from the lips of Zinoviev, and used it ostensively. Would not Lenin Himself have shuddered at such vaunting of the term 'Leninism' ? Lenin himself only claimed that he had rescued the true Marxian theory from the shame of revisionism, and made it applicable to the new circumstances of his times, expanding it to fit new situations. He had even assumed that, in the event of a German revolution, the leadership of the cause would pass naturally to the hands of the victorious German Party.

Even the very concept of Stalin's 'Leninism' has its faults. Stalin defined Leninism as the appropriate application of

Marxism to the epoch of Imperialism : Lenin himself had marked out five features in this modern Imperialism. At least half of these 'features' are no longer with us. Does it therefore follow that Leninism itself is now half obsolete? There may even be a suspicion that Stalin's ultimate purpose might have been to turn Leninism into 'Stalinism' as a cult of his own. Old readers will remember that Moscow publications of yesteryear carried on their covers the portraits of Marx-Engels-Lenin-and Stalin side by side.

Without a doubt Lenin was the greatest among the disciples of Marx. But is it not equally true that Lenin's own belief was that he had applied Marxism itself to the situation before him expanded it to changed circumstances only? Consequently, Stalin's next step — the usage of the concept 'Marxism-Leninism' in open to serious objections.

Engels was Marx' life-long comrade. He did not allow a term like Marxism-Engelsism. To achieve a socialist revolution in any land would require a certain extension of Marxian theory, in the very nature of things. But does that require the coinage of a new 'ism'? Lenin at least had never thought it necessary. Socialist liberation came to East Europe in a way different to the Russian path; but did this require any new 'ism'? China did proclaim its own 'Thought of Mao Tsetung', but it did not surely count a 'Marxism-Leninism-Maoism'. Socialism has come to Vietnam, Cuba, and certain Third World countries in different ways. No new 'ism' has arisen thereby. Today we can discern a certain move towards socialism, in industrially developed and democratically oriented countries, to which the rather inappropriate term 'Euro-communism' has indeed been applied. Its possible pioneer was Antonio Gramsci. Yet no one has thought of this trend as 'Gramscism'. I believe that Lenin was quite correct in sticking to the term Marxism. In every case the basic thought of Marx has to be applied in a certain expanded form, but this does not require the invention of a new 'ism', even as a compound term.

Let us now turn to some of Stalin's speeches and writings. To realise their weakness, we have to keep before our mind some of the Marxian classics. For example : *The German Ideology* ; *Theses on Feuerbach* ; *The Communist Manifesto* ; the celebrated *Preface to the Critique of Political Economy* ; the 'Formen' ; 'Capitals', 'Marx-Engels Correspondence' *Historical Writings of Marx and Engels* ; *Critique on Gotha Program* ; the explanatory letters of Engels near the end of his career — and so on and so forth. Or, for example in Lenin's writings : *Development of Capitalism in Russia* ; *What Is To Be Done* ; *Two Tactics* ; *Materialism and Emperio-Criticism* ; *Teachings of Karl Marx* — etc. etc.

In the light of the corpus above, do not Stalin's writings appear as pale, emaciated ? Even in comparison with the non-classical *Prism Notebooks* of Gramsci ?

Stalin wrote his *Right of self-Determination* even before the Russian Revolution. Here he gave his formulation of the concept of a Nation. The term was given a distinctive static form, with no idea of a motion within it, and thereby self-determination became an eternal right. Under the glamour of Stalin's definition, we in India at one time thought of 17 'nations' in India with their specific rights to be for ever free. Yet Lenin had indicated correctly that national self-determination must depend on the interests of the toiling mass and therefore national self-determination cannot be an eternal verity.

Let us now turn to Stalin's famous speech after Lenin's death — Departing from us, Comrade Lenin has left to us his directives — We vow to you, Comrade Lenin, that we shall carry out your behests etc. etc. — Does not this sound like an Orthodox Church litany ? And thy influence of the Orthodox Church ironically did fall on Stalin in his youth. Curiously enough, one is reminded of the erstwhile use of the 'mirror documents' in the Chinese Party. This was a case of Self-purification for Chinese comrades who were asked to contemplate their shortcomings in the light of the character of Marx,

Lenin etc. It savoured very much of the Jesuit practice of self-purification.

Stalin's celebrated '*Dialectical and Historical Materialism*' was once a 'must' in communist study. Readers can easily see today that its formula of 'hence—hence' has a certain logical flaw. The book reads like some 'Marxism Made Easy' primar.

Next that famous Speech :— the bourgeois democratic flag today is trodden down into the dust—it is for us, the communists to hoist the standard aloft. Apart from the inherent irony, was it not a farce to talk in such a vein in a land where dissent is unlawful, punishable even now ?

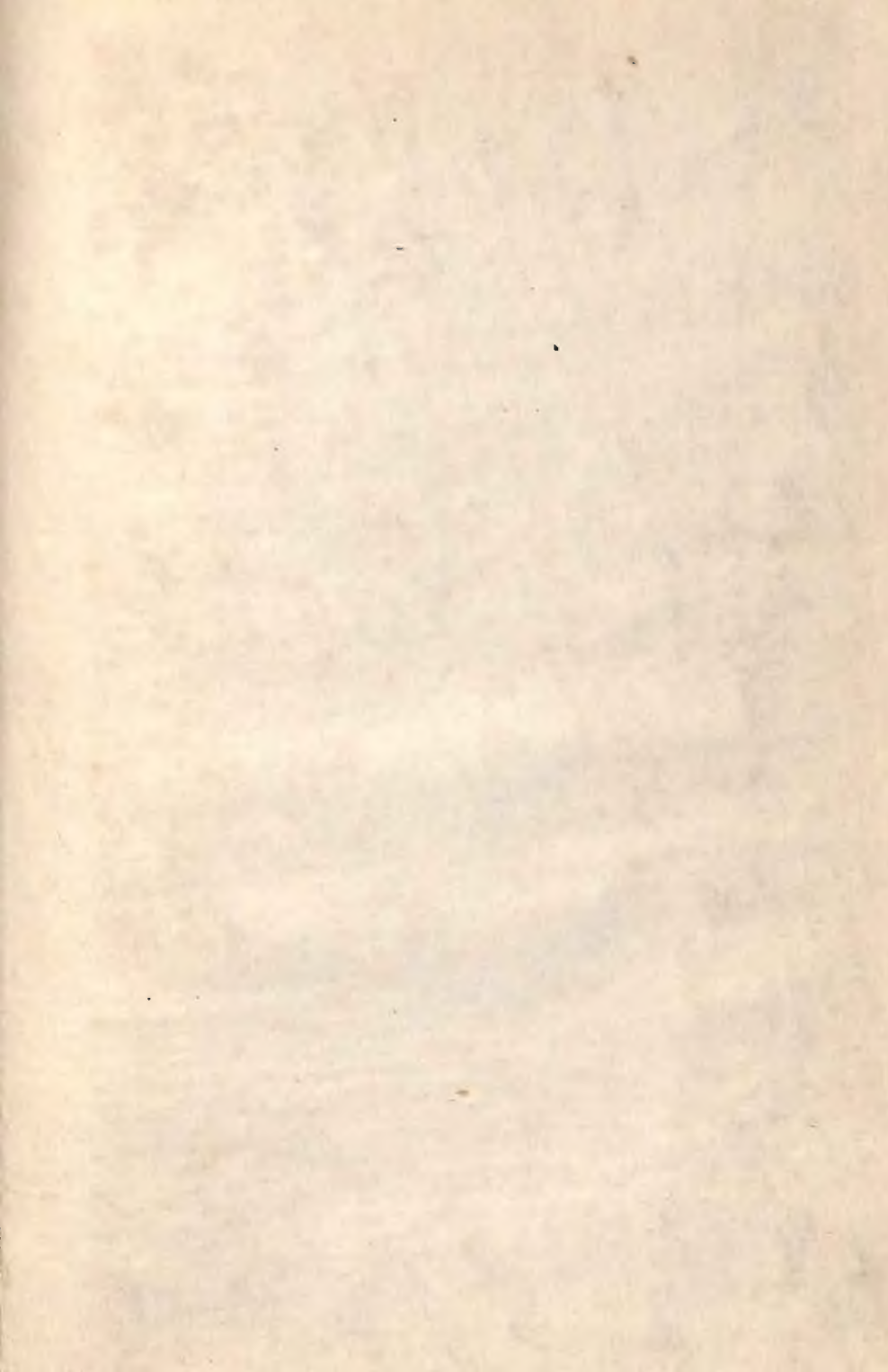
Stalin's last major work was the *Problems* which attempted to describe the coming transition from socialism to communism in Soviet Land. I do not know how many still read this book. With great self-satisfaction Stalin implies here that the transition to Marx's 'second-stage' of full communism is almost round the corner. From Socialism in One Country, Stalin perhaps was capable of achieving Communism in One Country !

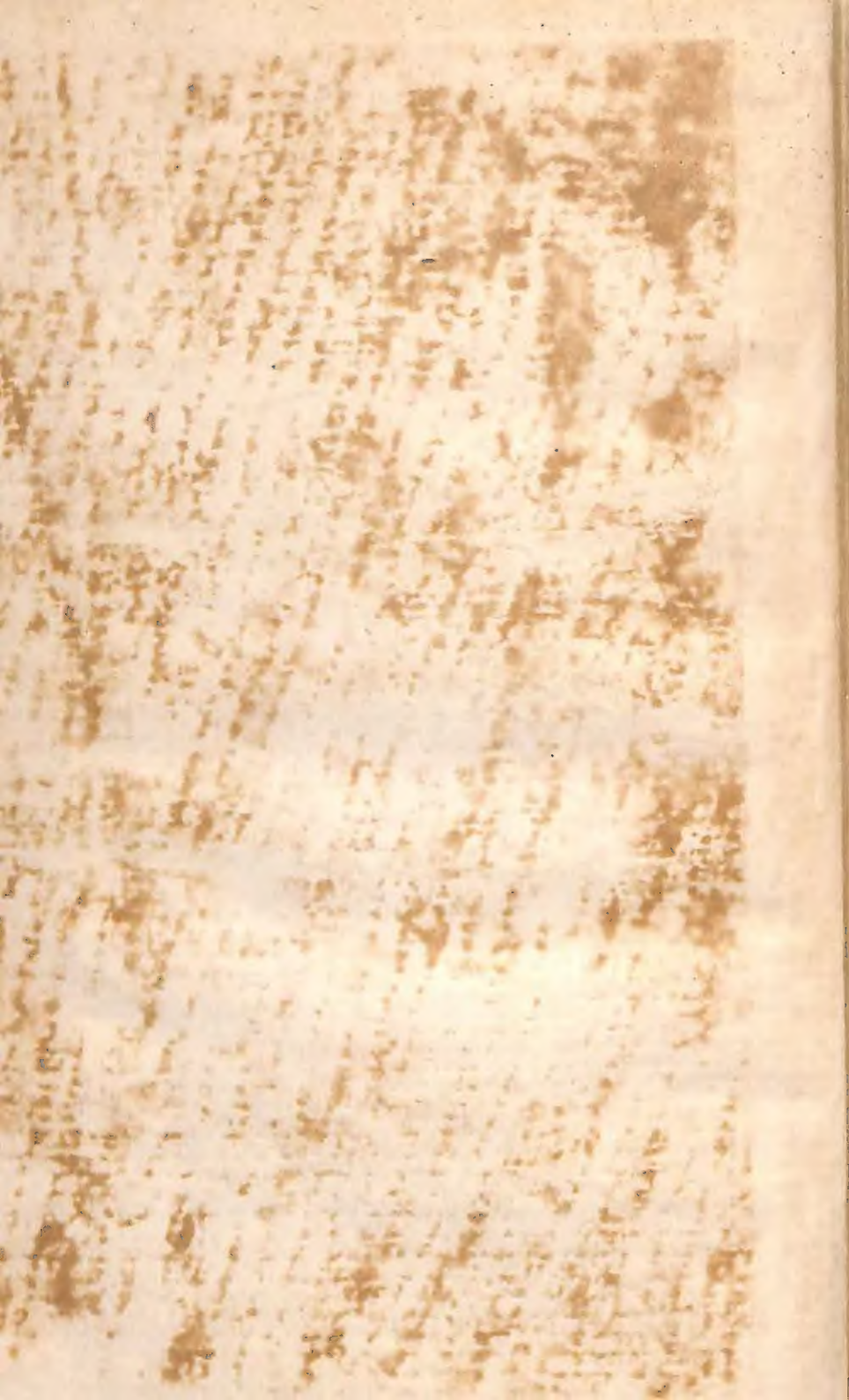
The actual progress in the Soviet Union is a matter of pride to us. To protect it, to help its fulfilment is our Marxian duty.— It is a matter of regret for us that Stalin has retarded for very many years that progress and fulfilment. And this, because of his inconsiderate policy his overweening ambition.

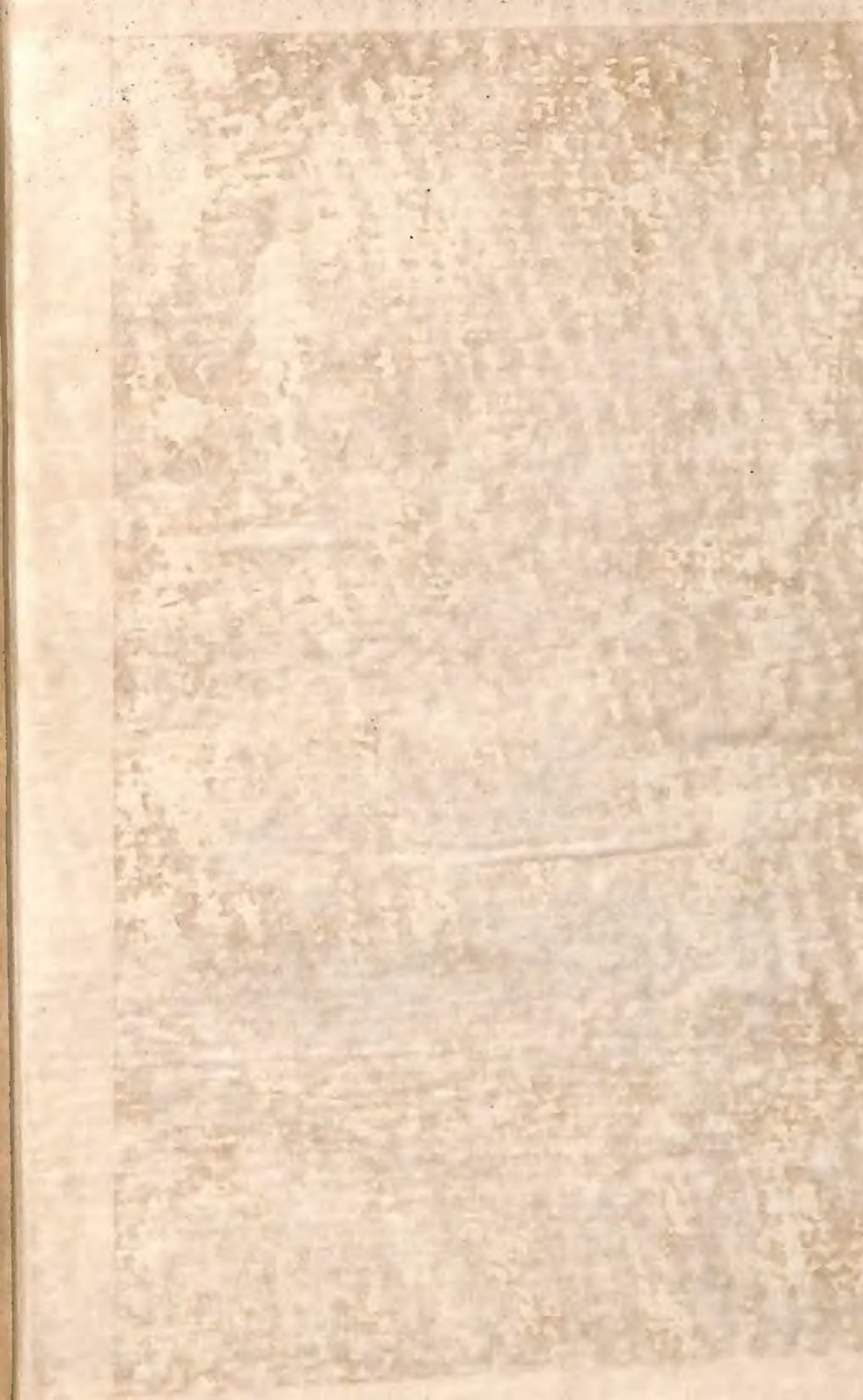
We must remember that Marxism implies two forms of Revolution. First, the social transformation covering an entire epoch, the true historical change. This is an inevitable slow revolution, in which personal failures ultimately count little. The second form is the revolution in a region or comparatively on a quicker pace. Here the element of personal failure does retard the stream of change, just as personal greatness can accelerate the current. Stalin, in thought and action, did retard this process. And that is the substance of our charge against him.











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